

1 Corinthians 1:10-19 – “Straightening Out Divisions”

We left off in 1 Corinthians 1:9 where we read that we have been ***called into the fellowship of His Son...***

John would write: **1 John 1:1–4**, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”*

Fellowship with Jesus is going to result in proper fellowship with others. If your fellowship with Jesus is out of sorts, you can bet your relationships with one another are also going to follow suit and be out of sorts.

This is why I believe at the beginning of this letter we see Paul putting such an emphasis on Jesus Christ, and not just on Jesus, but on Him being your Lord. Is He the One you’re truly serving? Is He the One that is governing your life to where everything is centered around Him?

- When this is taking place in the life of a believer, then there’s going to be far less chance of a church that is spinning out of control in divisions and dissensions.

“1 Corinthians is so vital to us. Conditions have not changed much. Many of the problems that confronted the Corinthians plagued present-day believers as well. Living wisely for God is not easy in the midst of a sinful and materialistic age. But 1 Corinthians is filled with valuable and important lessons... which (are) so essential for our walk with the Lord.” - J. Allen Blair ¹

1. The Individuals – 1:10-13

1:10 - *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 Lasseigne, Jeff (2005). Ezra. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *Highway 66- A Unique Journey Through the 66 Books of the Bible* (p. 144-145). Santa Ana, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing.

I plead with you... Paul has every right as an apostle, a person of authority, to deal with this church strongly and to command them to shape up. But that's not what Paul does. He pleads with them. This Greek word is translated elsewhere as comfort, encourage or beseech. That's a great word isn't it?

One of those words we've kind of lost in our temporary language. This word plead or beseech is the Greek word *parakaleō*, same form of the word used for the Comforter that Jesus spoke of regarding the Holy Spirit – *parakletos*. It means to call to one's side; to urge; to call to one's aid.

- Paul is not speaking authoritatively but compassionately. Almost like saying, *'I want to encourage you to do that which is going to be to your benefit and blessing.'* Paul's heart of concern is matched by his heart of compassion.
- I used to make fun of cat owners, and now in God's humour (or punishment) I've become a cat owner. And being a cat owner, I know the importance of this word *parakaleō*. When I'm trying to call my cat Ozzy inside for the night, I'm not commanding him to get in right now. If I do, he's going to look at me with that look like, *'You better not be talking to me like that. You need to try that again!'* I have to beseech him, plead with him. I call graciously to come alongside me because I have something good for him. Those of you with cats know this (those whom I used to look down on, but now beseech to have grace on me).

So though Paul has every right to be a little annoyed, perhaps angry, he's not getting frustrated with this church, he's pleading with them to do that which is beneficial and better.

And again, he's not acting in his own interests, this is in line with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Lord's desire and heart for us as a church.

- And aren't you glad that the Lord responds to us in His compassion and grace. He doesn't condemn or criticize us when we get out of line, but He lovingly corrects us and encourages us to that which is better and profitable for us.

And Paul gets into this area that they were falling short in – their unity.

...that you all speak the same thing...

Now that's good counsel if you know what that same thing is. Because a person can argue over speaking the same thing as long as it's their thing! But it's not

about finding the same thing to speak about, it's about discovering the right thing to speak about. And that's Christ. He's the One that we should be focussed on and promoting. As we'll see, these guys were drawing party lines and it only led to divisions.

- Now we can have differences of opinions, but these should not cause us to separate or draw lines in the sand over. We don't need to part company with one another just because we may have a different view over something as another person does. As long as it doesn't conflict with what we say about Jesus.
- In other words, we don't want to major on the minors, but we also don't want to minor on the majors. We want to keep it about Jesus, and having a right, biblical view of Jesus.

...**that there be no divisions**... The word for division is *schisma*. This speaks of a disagreement and separation that takes place between people. It more accurately describes a tearing or splitting. It's something that does damage and is not always easily repairable. This is why Paul is pleading with them not to continue down this path.

- The divisions in the church at Corinth were creating cliques and separation. It's ok to have a circle of friends at church, as long as it's not a closed circle. If we're keeping people out rather than bringing people in, there's something wrong with that picture.
- Satan loves division. He loves to get people out of unity and fighting each other. The church has struggled to be the witness it should be throughout history because of the internal divisions and conflicts that have taken place within.

When we make peripheral things (secondary things) the more important things, then we'll begin to be out of balance. When certain views or positions rise above that of Jesus, then we're not going to experience unity.

We all find unity and harmony in and through Jesus. Don't let anything in your mind rise above Him in importance.

You can have an anti vaxxer and a pro vaxxer walk in unity and love when Jesus is the greater value.

You can be a liberal and a conservative and walk in unity and love when Jesus is more important than those things.

You can be a Canucks fan and hang out with a Flames fan and if... actually that's probably where you draw the line. That's maybe going too far 😊.

- But what Paul is saying is that you can have differences of opinions on the peripheral things, but when it comes to the important things – the things of Jesus – we’re to be on the same team! *Speak the same thing!*

Paul’s desire is that they ***be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.***

This word used for the phrase *perfectly joined together* is the Greek word *katartizo*, which means: “to render, i.e. to fit, sound, complete. To mend (what has been broken or rent), to repair.” ²

- Barclay says this is: “a medical word used of knitting together bones that have been fractured, or joining together a joint that has been dislocated. The disunion is unnatural and must be cured for the sake of the health and efficiency of the body of the Church.” ³

“A man was selling Christmas trees and noticed a couple on the hunt for a Christmas tree. The couple looked rather poor and out of their element. After bypassing trees that were too expensive, they found a Scotch pine that was OK on one side but pretty bare on the other. Then they picked up another tree that was not much better—full on one side, scraggly on the other. She whispered something, and he asked if \$3 would be OK. The salesman figured both trees wouldn’t sell, so he agreed.

A few days later this salesman was walking down the street and saw this couple in their home and through the living room window he saw a beautiful tree. It was thick and well rounded. He knocked on their door, and they told him how they had pushed the two trees together where the branches were thin. Then they tied the trunks together. The branches overlapped and formed a tree so thick you couldn’t see the wire. The salesman described it as “a tiny forest of its own.” “So that’s the secret,” he asserted. “You take two trees that aren’t perfect, that have flaws, that might even be homely, that maybe nobody else would want. If you join them together just right, you can come up with something really beautiful.”” ⁴

When we come together and are joined together with the same mind, and the same judgment or purpose, then good things are going to come of it. Our flaws become less of an issue as we seek to exalt Jesus.

² Strong, J. (1995). In *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

³ Barclay, W. (2002). *The Letters to the Corinthians* (3rd ed., p. 17). Westminster John Knox Press.

⁴ Larson, C. B., & Ten Elshof, P. (2008). *1001 illustrations that connect* (pp. 260–261). Zondervan Publishing House.

- **Philippians 2:1–5**, *"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,"*

1:11 - *For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.*

We're not too sure who Chloe is or where her location exactly was (she might have been in Ephesus, but more likely from Corinth). People from her household brought this report to Paul that there were contentions happening within the Corinthian church. These contentions were revolving around who they were aligning themselves with.

1:12-13 - *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." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Four groups or parties had emerged out of this church. The Paul party, the Apollos party, the Peter (Cephas) party, and the Christ party.

- Some felt like Paul was the right guy to align with as he founded the church in Corinth and he preached grace and opened the door to Gentiles. Perhaps this was a predominantly Gentile group.
- Some thought Apollos rose above the rest as he was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures as Acts 18:24 records. This group may have been the philosophers and intellectual elite feeling like they were diving into the more deeper truths and surpassing the less educated.
- The Peter party perhaps had a more Jewish following. Peter was one of the original apostles who walked with Christ. His followers could have thought he had the closest connection to Christ.
- The Jesus party viewed themselves as the most spiritual party. What's to argue with that? It seems like this party at least had it right. But Paul calls them out too.

The problem wasn't so much that people looked up to or appreciated different leaders, the problem was that they viewed themselves better than others based

on who they were following. This boasting in who they were following, was more so a boasting in themselves. We're better than you because we follow _____.

This was the beginning of denominationalism. Denominations aren't wrong but when they begin to divide us or give us a sense of superiority, we're heading for trouble.

A man was walking across a bridge one day, and saw a lady standing on the edge, about to jump off. He immediately ran over and said "Stop! Don't do it!"

"Why shouldn't I?" she said.

The man replied, "Well, there's so much to live for!"

"Like what?"

"Well...are you religious or atheist?"

"Religious."

"Me too! Are you Christian or Jewish?"

"Christian."

"Me too! Are you Catholic or Protestant?"

"Protestant."

"Me too! Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?"

"Baptist."

"Wow! Me too! Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?"

"Baptist Church of God."

"Me too! Are you Original Baptist Church of God, or are you Reformed Baptist Church of God?"

"Reformed Baptist Church of God."

"Me too! Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1879, or Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915?"

The lady responded, "Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation of 1915!"

To which the man said, "You heretic!" and then pushed her off.

The key is to keep the main thing the main thing. Don't get sidetracked by petty things that really don't matter. Keep in the fellowship of Jesus (this is what we've been called into – vs. 9) and focus on that which binds us rather than that which bugs us.

Paul asked 3 questions of which the answer was a resounding 'no'!

Is Christ divided?

Was Paul crucified for you?

Were you baptized in the name of Paul?

You see, Jesus never conducted Himself like this while He ministered on earth. Jesus was not divisive or creating conflict among the disciples.

- I'm sure Jesus could've many times talked smack about Peter behind his back with the other disciples. Could you imagine!? But Jesus didn't divide.
- He prayed that we may be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:11).

Jesus didn't bring division and Jesus is not to be divided up among different factions. Christians are all one in Christ.

Nobody owes their allegiance to anyone but Christ.

Paul himself is quick to put down any potential fan club that might be growing in support of him. He's not the one to build a following after. He didn't give his life for others to be saved. What good can Paul do other than point people to the One who is good. That's Jesus! It's all about Jesus.

Paul didn't baptize people into his name as though he were trying to amass personal disciples. His purpose was always about shining the light on Jesus!

2.The Issue – 1:14-16

1:14-16 - *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶ Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.*

Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Gaius (Rom 16:23) were people he baptized, as well as the household of Stephanus. But this was done unto Jesus, not unto himself. After these he can't even remember who he's baptized.

- This is not to make a case to dismiss baptism or its importance. Paul saw that it was important, but it was irrelevant as to who did the baptizing. The importance was on who you were being baptized into.

The issue is that people in the church were making a big deal over individuals, rather than the focus being on Jesus.

3.The Insanity – 1:17-19

1:17 - *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.*

Again, Paul is not downplaying baptism, he's just saying that his primary role was to preach the gospel.

And preaching the gospel revolved around the cross. This was not about coming with wise words, or a wonderfully crafted oratory masterpiece. It was about proclaiming the message and the power of the cross. Paul didn't want anything to take away from the importance of the cross – that it was all about the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross to bring about salvation for us. That's the gospel – the Good News!

The entire theme of the Bible is the provision made for the redemption of sinners through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1:18-19 - *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

Why is it foolishness? Because people want to think they can save themselves. Pride gets in the way and they don't want to think that it took someone better than them to pay the penalty for their sin.

Or for some in Paul's day it seemed a foolish thing to follow a leader that couldn't even protect His own life. They wrestled with the idea that their long awaited for Messiah would actually die on a cross.

This particularly went against the Greek culture of this day. They put a big emphasis upon their mythological gods, and to now here about a God who would come and sacrifice Himself upon a cross for mere mortals, was absolute lunacy in their minds. Their gods were mighty and powerful and you feared them. But how could they fear a God who died on a cross? The cross was the greatest shame and humiliation. It was reserved only for the vilest offender, and no Roman could be executed by this means – it was too humiliating.

Paul was right, it was foolishness to those who are perishing.

- We've kind of glorified the cross today. We wear it proudly, but think of these people in that day. It would be like us going up to someone today and saying, *I've found the answer, I've found peace – it's found in the electric chair!* And we begin to sing, *At the electric chair at the electric chair where I first saw the light!* The person you're talking to would think your nuts. No

really man, there's power in the electric chair. Yea I know, but it's that power I want nothing to do with.

But whatever the world thought was the right move, the wise move, God shows that He has a better move. He's flipping things upside down and doing something so wonderful, so powerful that only those that put their trust in Him will really experience.

This message of the cross is the gospel that Paul preached. And of this gospel he would say in **Romans 1:16**, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..."*

Notice the progression on both sides. We will be following along one of those two sides – there's no in between. We either ***are perishing*** or we ***are being saved***.

- In *being saved*, it doesn't imply that we're not quite saved yet, like we have to achieve it still. But salvation is a continual process. We were saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, and when He comes again we'll be saved from the presence of sin.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 29:14 to show from Old Testament history that the way of the Lord has not changed. It has always been God's way to go against the tide of human wisdom. He works in ways that go against or beyond human wisdom. We can't always figure Him out, which is why we need to live by faith.