

Last time we began our trek through 1 Corinthians... [see transp for first study]

In this study, we'll see Paul roll up his sleeves and begin to deal with matters needing attention. There are no problem free churches. When problems arise, they are opportunities to see God work—and for us to grow.

The first issue Paul addresses in his letter to the Corinthian church is the subject of divisions. The problem of divisions in the church is certainly not new...

Charles Wesley wrote some of his hymns to promote his brother John's doctrine of entire sanctification. The second verse of his "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" asks God to "take away our bent to sinning." This was too much for Calvinist Augustus Toplady. In a magazine of which he was editor, Toplady wrote an article in refutation, detailing a picture of man's potential for sinning. He arrived at the mathematical conclusion that a man of eighty is guilty of many millions of sins, a debt he can never hope to pay but for which he need not despair because of the sufficiency of Christ. He closed the article with an original poem. "A Living and Dying Prayer for the Holiest believer in the World." This poem, now one of the most beloved hymns of all time, and know under the title, "Rock of Ages," was born out of party spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Let's look at the text...

I. We see Paul's appeal concerning the problem of division (10-12).

READ verses 10-12.

Notice three things about his appeal...

**A. Paul states the basis for his appeal (10a).**

Q: What is the basis?

1. *We are brothers.*

Q: What's significant about Paul's use of the term "brothers" here?

2. *We all profess mutual allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Q: What's the significance of making this appeal *in the name of the Lord Jesus*?

These are two vital things to keep in mind in conflict resolution.

We are brothers, and we all profess allegiance to the Lord.

**B. Paul states the intent of his appeal (10b).**

It's threefold...

1. *We need to speak the same thing.*

The NIV reads, "That all of you *agree* with one another."

2. *We need to get rid of schisms.*

Q: How much division are we to tolerate in the church? *No divisions.*

Discuss: Is this unrealistic? If Paul meant what he said, why do so many churches wink at cliques in the midst?

3. *We need to be united.*

How does this happen?

⇒Unity is not produced by making people look the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick John Gilman, [The Evolution of the English Hymn](#), Macmillan, 1927, pp. 223-225.

⇒Unity is produced when people think the same.

Paul says we are to be united “in mind and thought.”

Discuss: We don’t do this naturally. We don’t naturally think the same about things. What must happen for us to be united in mind and thought?

We must exhibit humility. We must also be teachable. In the areas where we differ in our thoughts, we must be willing to come to God’s Word, learn, and let go of ideas that lack biblical support.

### **C. Paul states the necessity of his appeal (11-12).**

#### *1. There were quarrels in the church (11).*

Q: How did he find out?

#### *2. There was rivalry in the church (12).*

Q: What type of rivalry? It was kind of like a football team rivalry of sorts. The people were rallying behind their “favorite” church leader or teacher.

Does this problem exist today? “I like So-and-so’s radio program. He’s the best.” “Well, that’s not what So-and-so says about that issue in his book!”

Realize this. No one leader possesses all the gifts needed for the good of the Body. Christ gave *gifts* (plural) to His church. If we devote ourselves to *one* voice, we’ll be deficient... We need the Body, the whole Body.

## II. We see Paul’s explanation concerning the remedy for division (13-17).

### **A. Paul confronts the church with some questions (13).**

#### *1. Is Christ divided?*

The answer? Certainly not. Then how can we be? We are His Body!

#### *2. Was Paul crucified?*

The answer? Absolutely not! Should we have a high view of church leadership? Yes. But church leaders—even Paul himself—are not the Savior. A leader’s job is to point our attention to the Lord.

#### *3. Were you baptized into the name of Paul?*

Q: What’s the significance of this question?

### **B. Paul corrects the church with a reminder (14-17).**

#### *1. He reminds them what didn’t happen (14-16).*

⇒He didn’t baptize very many of them.

Q: Why not?

⇒He baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas.

Q: Why does Paul emphasize this fact?

Note: Paul isn’t downplaying baptism. How do we know?

#### *2. He reminds them what did happen (17).*

⇒Christ sent him.

Notice the first words of verse 17, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach.” Christ gave him his mission. Christ is the Commander-in-Chief.

⇒Christ sent him to preach the Cross.

Q: To preach what? Paul will elaborate in the next section. We’ve seen what Paul said to the Corinthians. Now let’s discuss...

### Some Implications...

1. *Sins against the unity of the church are as serious as doctrinal and moral sins.*

The NT gives instruction for discipline for those who commit sins against the unity of the church (see Rom 16:17-18; \*\*see Titus 3:10-11)

Discuss: What are common reactions today towards people who contribute to party spirits in churches? How do churches often deal with people who foster divisiveness?

Sadly, this attitude is not only often ignored, but applauded. “I’ve got a right to speak my mind in *my* church. After all, my opinion is as good as anybody else’s!”

2. *When division exists between believers, we need to take specific action.*

**a. We need to substantiate that the problem is real, and not perceived.**

e.g. Verse 11—The brothers from Chloe’s household say there are quarrels.

**b. If it’s real, we need to address the problem, not ignore it.**

e.g. Verse 10—I appeal to you...

**c. We need to clarify what the problem is.**

e.g. Verse 12—One of you says, “I follow Paul...Apollos...Cephas...Christ.”

**d. We need to clarify what the goal is (and isn’t).**

e.g. Verse 10—That all of you may perfectly united in might and thought.

**e. We may need to clarify some misunderstood facts from the past.**

e.g. Verse 14—I did not baptize any of you.

**f. We must move ourselves out of the spotlight, and put the focus on Christ and His Cross.**

e.g. Verse 17—Christ did not send me to baptize...

When F.B. Meyer was pastoring Christ Church in London, Charles Spurgeon was preaching at Metropolitan Tabernacle, and G.Campbell Morgan was at Westminster Chapel. Meyer said, "I find in my own ministry that supposing I pray for my own little flock, 'God bless me, God fill my pews, God send my a revival,' I miss the blessing; but as I pray for my big brother, Mr. Spurgeon, on the right-hand side of my church, 'God bless him'; or my other big brother, Campbell Morgan, on the other side of my church, 'God bless him'; I am sure to get a blessing without praying for it, for the overflow of their cups fills my little bucket."<sup>2</sup>

**g. We need to call for—and model—a commitment to unity.**

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<sup>2</sup> W. Wiersbe, [The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers](#), p. 193.