

1 Corinthians 1:10-12      Are You of Christ or Someone Else?

**1 Corinthians 1:10-12** <sup>10</sup> Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

There are many times in life where we have problems with other people that escalate to the point where if something isn't done immediately they can get out of hand. All of us have had to deal with such things in one form or another: an unreasonable employer, family members we may disagree with, spouses who feel neglected and lash out, our children who think we're unfair and so on.

If not dealt with these minor problems can explode into something devastating that could cause the kind of division that results in alienated relationships and the strife that accompanies it.

When you think about it, Christianity is about relationships. First and foremost, the relationship we have with our Creator and God through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, who has reconciled us to the Father by becoming a man and taking our place for the penalty of sin, and then raising bodily from the dead three days later.

But, there are also the relationships we have with others who have embraced Christ and are now part of this family we know as the body of Christ. But the implied result of these relationships is that there is union and fellowship in the Spirit who brings us all together in Christ with the express purpose of bringing glory to God.

When this union and fellowship is broken down or in the process of being broken down the body of Christ actually accomplishes what Satan desires and that is to dishonor our Lord and Savior. And this is what Paul is going to be addressing throughout parts of this letter.

He begins by stating their position in Christ which is that they are sanctified and saints as they have received by faith the grace extended to them by God. They also have received riches which

include the ability to speak and to know the truth about Christ and this salvation He offers.

And so, they have essentially, like all of us today, have been called by God to be His agents of truth and love according to His word. But because we are His agents or ambassadors we must represent Him faithfully in the power of the Spirit.

And we must know with certainty that the Lord loves us and will never let any one of His children go because He is faithful to be there for us and to ultimately bring us home to Himself. This is what Paul said in our text last week.

1CO 1:8-9 “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

And so, in light of this relationship that we have with our God through Christ Paul now exhorts these Corinthian believers to consider their behavior and how it is not consistent with their profession of faith in Christ who tells us to love God with all of our hearts, souls, strength and minds, and our neighbors as ourselves.

On the one hand they exclaim that they do love God, but not to love your neighbor, or in this case fellow believers in Christ, not only denies that love we say we have for God, but it also creates some barriers, not only for fellowship within the body, but it also throws up barriers for those unbelievers who are watching.

We are meant to be lights in this world and an example of what it means to know God and when the world looks to us they are really looking at our convictions concerning this relationship we have with Christ. And what Paul is essentially saying to these Corinthians, and by extension to all believers, is that do we really believe and walk in what we preach about our God and Savior?

Christ’s name is on the line and Paul wants to convey the importance of faithfully representing Him to all mankind and to each other. And so, we come to our text this morning.

1CO 1:10 “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

Notice that Paul begins by addressing these people as brothers who, as we’ll see, are acting in many cases like unbelievers. In

other words, they are not unbelievers, but brethren. And so, Paul establishes that they are family in Christ.

But, even family has their differences at times which in many cases leads to all sorts of divisions. And this is why he begins by saying, “that I appeal to you...” Paul wants them to know that he has a heart-felt burden for them to consider their ways and he wants to help.

This is what the word appeal or exhort, in some of your translations, means. It’s the Greek word *parakaleo* and it implies to call to one’s side. It would be like a father taking his arm and putting it around his son’s shoulders and drawing him close to comfort him with words of exhortation to help him get over any particular problem.

Though it would be a firm exhortation, it’s done in an assuring way which ensures that love is still being extended because we are family. In fact, this is essentially the same Greek word which is used of the Holy Spirit in the gospel of John.

JOH 14:16;26-27 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [Comforter] to be with you forever -...” But the Counselor [Comforter] , the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you....”

Here the word for Comforter or Counselor is *parakletos* and it carries the same idea. One who comes alongside to comfort and counsel according to the truth of God’s word and will.

That is a large part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to be there to lead us and guide us in the ways of Christ. And so, when Paul says that he is appealing to us or exhorting us, he is saying that as the Holy Spirit’s ministry is to conform us into the image of Christ, Paul is assuming a similar ministry to the degree that God is using him as one of the means through which the Spirit accomplishes that as he is faithful to give these people the word of God.

And so, he is really coming alongside like an older brother with the kind of wisdom which will help them grow. And by the way, this is a great example of how we should approach the ministry of counseling or comforting in the truth of God’s word. It can be firm but it must be in truth and love.

Paul was always the kind of man who wanted to avoid having to use his authority in Christ in such a way where he had to impose a discipline which he knows would be perceived as harsh. He always preferred the more gentle approach as long as his recipients were willing to receive the truth.

2CO 10:1-2 “By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you - I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.”

But what does Paul mean when he gives this exhortation and then uses the phrase, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...”?

This is very important because Paul is clearly showing that this exhortation, which is about to follow, is not ultimately coming from the authority of Paul, but from the authority of God Himself. This doesn't negate Paul's authority as an apostle, but remember, this is Christ's church and He is the One who desires unity and fellowship to His glory.

And so, to say, “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” is the equivalent of saying that the Lord God who called me to this position wants your attention because He has something to personally say to you. He just happens to be using me, Paul, to convey it.

Now, that should change all our perspectives on all of Scripture which is God-breathed. This is God's word to us and we should listen to what He has to say. What is it then that God wants to convey to these Corinthians? What is it that He wants to do in the way of appealing to or exhorting these believers?

1CO 1:10 “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.”

Does this mean we are all to be clones and agree with one another to the degree that we say exactly the same things and let someone else do the thinking for us?

Not at all! Keep in mind what the context here is all about. It's about divisions which are taking place in the church at Corinth. And so, by implication, if there are divisions which are leading to

strife then they must move away from divisive thoughts and attitudes and get back to agreeing with one another.

On what should they agree? This is the vital question. Keep in mind that whatever they come to agreement on it will be foundational to their ability to be at peace with one another as well as their Savior as they move forward with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What could conceivably be so foundational that this would be compromised to the detriment of the body of Christ? Think for a moment about what our Lord said on a variety of occasions concerning how the sheep could be scattered and lead into confusion.

How many times has Paul and Peter as well as our Lord warned the church about false teachers and false doctrines? But, do false teachers always have to be infiltrating the church to produce false doctrines? Absolutely not!

Any teaching which counteracts the unity and peace which Christ came to give is actually a false and divisive teaching. And you can indeed be using the truth in the process without even realizing that this is happening. It doesn't have to be a sinister plot from the enemy as he sneaks into the church.

A wrong application from the truth or a wrong interpretation from God's word can be just as devastating as a wolf in sheep's clothing sneaking into the body of Christ to do deliberate harm.

It can cause factions as each particular party perceives that they have the truth while the others don't, and instead of helping each other to see the truth there arises party divisions. And instead of acting like family where we are to be there for each other and comfort and encourage each other, back-biting and gossip and all sorts of other ugly things arise.

And this is what is happening in this church at Corinth. These were, for the most part, true believers who began dividing themselves on what they perceived as important issues without taking the full counsel of God's word into account which in turn effected their ability to live holy lives to the glory of God.

And so, Paul steps in with the authority he has in Christ and yet with the gentleness which is often so important in situations like this, and he begins to instruct from the truth of God's word to get them back on track.

This is what they needed to be agreeing on. They needed to agree that, #1) there was a problem which was ungodly, and that, #2) the only true solution was a biblical one.

Just in that exercise it begins to refocus their attention and starts the uniting process. And so, as Paul ends verse seven he reminds them that they need to “be perfectly united in mind and thought” so they can deal with these divisions.

This term “division” is a very interesting in the Greek. It was a term which addressed something which was torn and in need of repair. Not torn completely through, but damaged. In fact, it was a term that fishermen used in reference to their nets which would often tear and be in need of being sown back together.

This is what Paul conveys here. The relationships of many of these people in Corinth were certainly torn and in need of repair, but it had not reached the point where the tears were complete and irreparable. There was time for hope and a solution. They were, after all, still family and still part of the same fellowship.

Though they may have been divided Paul was not, at this point, commanding that certain groups be cut out as he did on other occasions when dealing with different churches. This doesn't mean that certain unrepentant individuals would not be asked to leave a local body.

TIT 3:10-11 “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”

In fact, in the very letter we're studying we're going to see how Paul deals with one individual in this church who is acting in an immoral way. He goes so far as to hand this one over to Satan that his flesh might be destroyed but his spirit saved, which suggests that, under certain circumstances, there are physical consequences to unrepentant sin which God brings about to ultimately bring one of His children back in a right relationship here in this world.

There are many commentators who believe that when Paul wrote his second letter to Corinth the physical affliction which God ordained through the hand of Satan on this one individual had its intended purpose as this man evidently repented. When we get there we'll look at that in some detail.

But here in Corinth as Paul gives a general rebuke and exhortation he first lays the foundation for working through these problems.

And being of the same mind and thought regarding the word of God is where they must start.

In all of the counseling my wife and I have done over the years the one thing which is essential to helping someone see their sin and the solution to their sin problem, whether it be a problem with family, friends other believers or whatever, is that they agree that we must start with God's word as the touchstone to solving whatever problem there may be.

If the parties involved will not agree in mind and thought to this one essential element then all of the counseling in the world will not help their situation. This doesn't mean that if one of the parties is willing and the other is not there is no hope. God promises to honor the obedience of the one who honors Him.

And so, especially in marriage relationships where one party is not willing to walk according to God's word, if the other is willing, over time God will bless that person and will use that person to be a light to the other spouse.

But, back in our text, this same principle must apply and that's why Paul starts there. All the parties involved must stand on the truth of God's word if they are to bring back the unity and peace which God desires in that local body or any local body. Now that Paul has laid that ground work he immediately moves to the problem itself.

1CO 1:11 "My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you."

First, notice that Paul once again reassures these people that they are his brothers and sisters in Christ. Despite any problem or divisive attitude they remain the family of God as they move toward reconciliation.

But it seems that a woman by the name of Chloe was part of this congregation in Corinth and that some from her household, which could have included actual family members or slaves, made the long trek from Corinth to Ephesus which is where Paul is located at the writing of this letter.

The nature of their concern had to do with quarrels which had arisen in the church there in Corinth. And they must have been of such a volatile nature that those in Chloe's household, maybe at the direction of Chloe herself, travel to the apostle who was responsible for the planting of this church.

Now, I'm sure there have been those who have read this passage and thought that Chloe and her household are nothing more than tattle-tales. But, what this actually shows us is that #1) God is always aware of problems in His church and can use any means He desires to fix the problem, but #2) when the local body is not willing to deal with their own problem it is sometimes appropriate to go outside to get help.

This is not the norm as the leadership in any local body is first and foremost responsible to handle such problems. But at this time in the life of the church in Corinth, it appears that they may have been left without sufficient leadership.

Apollos, who took Paul's place when he moved on, evidently was no longer there. And so, there may have been a leadership vacuum, to where a woman, and quite possibly a godly woman in that congregation, felt she needed to take the lead in getting the ball rolling to persuade that church to get back on track.

In this case Paul does not rebuke her for doing so. By the way, we don't know anything about Chloe other than what we read about her here in this passage. But one of the reasons that Paul mentions her specifically by name is to lend credibility to the charges that she brings.

In other words, Paul doesn't simply bring charges on hear-say. He's not accusing this body of believers on second-hand information. Those in the household of Chloe are first-hand eyewitnesses of these things and on the testimony of two or three witnesses, which Paul intimates by saying that "some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.", Paul assures them that he trusts their testimony and that it is true.

The charge is that there are quarrels and the result of these quarrels are the divisions Paul spoke of in verse 10. So, now we've come full circle. But, it's now time to deal with the facts. And this is Paul's concern. He's not interested in gossip, he's interested in putting the facts on the table and making a case that involves the sin of many people in this church and then getting past it as it's resolved.

This doesn't mean there won't be consequences despite the fact that they may have repented. But it means that forgiveness is extended and it paves the way in bringing the peace and unity back so the Christ's church may once again be a viable and effective witness in their community.



I suppose the analogy we could draw from this is what we're seeing in Washington these days with the President. He has admitted to sexual misconduct with a staff member in the oval office. And though it's taken many days for him to actually use words like I'm sorry, forgive me and I've sinned as he addressed a prayer breakfast here recently, it doesn't mean that the consequences of his behavior should be swept under the carpet.

Can anyone imagine a teen-ager doing something stupid like vandalizing your car and causing minor damage and then after getting caught saying, 'I'm sorry', thinking that now everything is just as it was.

No, everything is not just as it was. The car is damaged and he needs to take responsibility in getting that car fixed. When people hurt other people, it may take more than simply apologizing, especially where the law has been broken.

And in the case of these believers it appears that there are many hurts which would cause these divisions, and apologies are a first place to start but it is going to take a concerted effort of being of the same mind and thought concerning God's solution according to His word to fix this mess in Corinth. So, here's the center of the quarrel.

1CO 1:12 "What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas (That is, Peter)"; still another, "I follow Christ."

What is this about? What could he possibly mean by different people in this church following different leaders? And then some following Christ?

Apparently many of these people were taking their eyes off of their Savior and placing them on men. Remember, that Paul is the one who planted this church and there were those who respected and had a godly affection for him as their apostle. But, after Paul left Apollos came in and was a very good speaker and certainly there was a new batch of believers who were drawn to him.

Peter evidently had visited Corinth and many knew him to be the first apostle to proclaim the gospel after the resurrection of Christ and 3,000 people were added to the church in one day, that day being Pentecost.

And of course, there were those who would claim none of these men as their leader, but exclusively held to Christ, or so it would appear. But upon closer examination that may not be the case.

It's important to note that neither Peter or Apollos, as well as Paul, would ever have agreed with the attitude of these people of elevating these leaders in the church to such a position.

This was definitely a pride thing as they pitted one leader against the other and then lined themselves up on one side or the other. Today we might see this in the way some Christians use their denominations as the means of separation. "I am of Wesley", or "I am of Calvin", or "I am of the group that speaks in tongues", while another boasts of "I am of the group that baptizes the only correct way".

A person or group becomes the most important entity rather than the love and truth of Christ. John the Baptist had it right when he said of himself and our Lord Jesus, "I must decrease, while He must increase."

None of this should discount the importance of leaders in the church and the authority they've been given by Christ, but never should they become the focal point for why a person likes this church or that church, unless those leaders are exalting Christ as they teach the truth without compromise, and then those in that church should thank God for such men.

But what about this group who is of Christ according to verse 12? Aren't these the ones who have it right? Well, keeping the context in mind, Paul is rebuking all of these groups for the attitude they have for any of these people, including Christ.

It is very likely that this last group may have boasted that they belonged to the right group, while turning their noses up at the rest. In fact, they may have boasted that they were the only true spiritual ones who had the common sense not to place men on pedestals, and that Jesus was only pleased with their particular clique.

William Barclay put it well when he said, "their real fault was not in saying they belonged to Christ, but in acting as if Christ belonged to them. It may well describe a little, intolerant, self-righteous group."

But the problem with all of these groups is that the love of Christ did not reside with any of them because love covers a multitude of sins and it seems they were having a field trying to point each

other's sins out, not to mention that love does not result in quarreling which is what was happening here in our text.

Later as we get into chapter 13, which many label as the love chapter, Paul will begin to show these Christians how love actually is to work in the body of Christ. But the one thing we should take away with us this morning is that there is only one source which not only identifies our sinful relationships with other people, but also has the solution to the right way we are to dwell in unity and peace, and that's the word of God.

All of the psychology and all of the worldly wisdom of men will never hold a candle to the light of the truth which our Lord Jesus points us to for our relationship with our Lord and other people. Divisions in the church and among others usually starts with a prideful attitude which the Scriptures warn against.

PRO 13:10 "Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice."

PRO 29:23 "A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor."

May our love for the brethren flourish, and may our love for the world demonstrate itself as we bring the truth of who Christ is, and may we do it in such a way that we could never be accused of any prideful way but only a humble attitude of thankfulness that God loved us even while we were sinners and gave us life in Christ, who loved us and died for the penalty of our sins.

That is where our unity begins and ends, that is where our peace resides. Praise God! May we be perfectly united in mind and thought as it relates to the great salvation we have in Christ Jesus and may that always translate to loving each other in the Lord as we encourage each other toward love and good deeds.