

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

Paul had just spoken of the high and holy fellowship into which the church had been called. “The fellowship of God’s Son Jesus Christ. This fellowship is nothing else but the fellowship of the Holy Trinity, a fellowship of the sweetest love and communion that had existed in eternity from before the world had been created. Man was created as a high and holy being with the capacity, as far as a creature was able, to partake of this fellowship and communion. Man had lost this communion and fellowship in Adam and had come under the curse of sin and death, but what man lost in Adam he regains in Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and holy calling—to have fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. This fellowship is constantly referred to by the Apostle Paul, and lies at the root of all that he teaches.

Verse 10 begins with a strong word in the Greek that implies a strong contrast is about to follow. What Paul is going to say, is in strong contrast with what he has just said. Before I spoke of the fellowship of Jesus Christ into which you were called; NOW, I am going to speak of the real conditions at Corinth:

- I. Their divisions: He had heard from reliable sources that there were “contentions” among them. It had been “made clear”—Paul didn’t want to believe it, but had been convinced of the deplorable contentions. The word is the same one that is translated “variance”—one of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5. It simply means emotional quarrels and factions.
  - A. Paul’s strong appeal to them: the ideal unity that is in Christ.
    1. “in the name of Jesus Christ” There is only one name: There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. No divisions: that is, no dissensions. This does not speak of schisms, but of the spirit of contentiousness that leads to schisms.
    2. What Paul means when he speaks of Christian unity:
      - a. “Perfectly joined together.”
        - i. As of a something that is broken apart, and needs repaired to be put back together again: as a ship, a net, a wall. The church at Corinth was all broken apart, and need meticulous care and labor to put the parts back together again. How can a ship fulfill its purpose, if it is all broken apart into parts and pieces. How can it carry its cargo to the far corners of the world when it is in such disarray?
        - ii. It can also apply to a human body, as in II Cor. 13:9, where the perfection of the body is in all the parts working together.
        - iii. Putting all the pieces back together, so that each part does what it is supposed to do, in perfect accord and symmetry with all the other parts. The perfection of the whole is related to each of the parts, and the perfection of each part is in connection to the perfection of the whole.

- iv. The unity is not monotonous sameness, but beautiful harmony, which only the composer might understand, as in a great symphony. How beautiful and stirring are the trombones and trumpets at the proper time according to the score; but what if a trombone player decides he will do his own thing during a most exquisite tapestry of strings and flutes? “People like what I do,” he says, and begins to blare away at the wrong time and place. The beauty of a symphony; the glory of a human body, the efficiency of a great ship or piece of machinery, is for each part to do its part well, but in harmony with the plan that comes from God alone, as we saw in our last message from Galatians.
- b. The nature of the unity:
  - i. Of one mind: The same kind of mind. To have the mind of Christ;
  - ii. Of one judgment: speaks of the will: to make choices in a Christlike way;
  - iii. Of one voice: to speak the same thing. The unity verbalized: the gives the foundation for creeds. Christian unity can be put into creeds: thus we speak of the Three Forms of Unity.
- c. The church there had degenerated into factionalism: I am of Paul, Peter, Apollos, Christ [as if Christ could be separated from His apostles and servants—it was Christ that they were tearing apart by their selfish attendance to their own agendas—the desire to impose their own agenda on the church. Paul rejected the partisanship of those who claimed to follow him; even those who claimed to be “of Christ” had become a contentious party like the rest—the whole spirit was wrong, and Paul rejects all of it.
- d. Summary: True Christian unity consists of agreement in doctrine and agreement in motive and affections; so that the church is committed not only to the doctrine of the Bible, but to the love care and nurture of one another in Jesus Christ, to care for the weak and needy, to seek the wayward, and to love one another in sincerity and truth—not to use our gifts against each other, but to use our gifts to win one another for the glory of God and the love of Jesus Christ.

II. The cause of their divisions. They gloried in men and not in Christ. As Calvin says in commenting on this passage.

- A. “Is Paul crucified for you.” “Were you baptized in the name of Paul” This is another way of saying, “Who owns you.” Who does the church belong to? What is the end and glory of the Church of Jesus Christ? Paul uses this same argument in this same book, in chapter 7, verse 23: “Ye are bought with a price; be ye not the servants of men.” Baptism is a mark of ownership, and therefore we are baptized in the name of the “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” Or, simply in the name of Christ, for it is through Christ that we have access into the fellowship of the Holy Trinity. The church is the body of Christ. It belongs to Jesus Christ, and through Him, to the Holy Trinity. It is therefore a frightful thing to seek to turn the church to serve selfish and party purposes.
- B. Jesus Christ is the only Lord of the church; We are all servants of Jesus Christ. We must not only refuse the temptation to lord it over other; but must also resist the temptation to yield to the factious spirit and become followers of men.
- C. Only One died and purchased the church for Himself, and that is Jesus Christ. It is Christ who rightfully gained authority over His people, by the shedding of His blood on the Cross.
  - 1. We are all, therefore to live under the authority of Christ, and must refuse any authority that does not come from Him.
  - 2. Those who would seek to impose their own agenda, deny the cross of Christ, and their own baptism. This is Paul’s argument here, so he is not talking of a minor thing.

3. We are all, therefore under authority to Christ: members of the church, in whatever role; husbands, wives, children. We are all under authority. A great deal of sin and strife comes from not understanding and obeying this authority.
  - D. We become covenant breakers, and deniers of Christ, if we allow ourselves to usurp the authority that belongs only to Jesus Christ, and to impose the wills of men, or to impose our own will, upon the church of Jesus Christ, and become in opposition to Him, whether in doctrine, in will, or in affections, as we saw above.
- III. The major thing is not some outward thing, as baptism; but the cross of Jesus Christ. The flesh glories in outward thing; faith in the cross of Christ. Next week, we will consider the cross of Christ as it is opposed to the wisdom of the world, but it is sufficient today to emphasize that everything that is beautiful in the church comes from the preaching of the cross of Christ.
- A. All the wisdom of the church is comprehended in the Cross of Christ. It is in the Cross that we see things as they really are:
    1. We see the power of sin, that disfigures and destroys everything natural in man;
    2. We see the love and beauty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
    3. We see the truth of the wrath of God against sin.
    4. We see the wisdom of God; in being perfectly true and loyal to Himself, and yet finds a way to redeems His people—nothing of this sort had ever entered into the mind of man.
    5. We see the way that we are to love one another: to serve one another, and to give ourselves for the good of the church; not to impose our own wills upon the church.
  - B. The opinions of those who are perishing are not to be considered. Very often factions arise in the church because people are embarrassed because the church is despised by the world, and they desire to make the Church more attractive to the world. This cannot be done without making the cross of Christ of no effect. The very message that is the power of God is the very thing that is despised of the world. —That is foolishness to the world.
  - C. The message of the Gospel is a simple one, and must be preached in simplicity and clarity: “In Adam we are miserable sinners, under the curse of sin and death, and we cannot help ourselves; but God in mercy send His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in the place of sinners, so that anybody who believes on Him, may have everlasting life, and will not come into condemnation, but will pass from death unto life.”
  - D. Let us not be dismayed if men turn away from the Gospel; but let us rejoice in those who hear and believe; let us embrace those who hear and believe and not be surprised if men turn away. Let us not seek to make a fellowship that includes both those who believe and those who reject the Gospel, but let us embrace with Christian love and compassion, those who do believe, and who embrace the Cross of Christ.

May God bless.