

A Sin Against *Koinonia* (1 Corinthians 1:10–16)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/22/2020)

Introduction

Paul introduced this letter expressing sincere thanks to God for the Corinthian Christ-followers. He saw evidence that these believers were genuinely called of God into the glorious salvation prepared for them in Christ. They were lacking in no spiritual resource to continue their kingdom pursuit in their pagan culture. Jesus would continue to sustain them by His Word and Spirit as they waited for His return.

Nevertheless, this church was fraught with serious problems that needed to be corrected through repentance. The problems consisted of divisions, tolerated immorality, trivial lawsuits before unrighteous judges, issues with respect to marriage and divorce, eating food offered to idols, head coverings for worship, disruptions at the Lord's table, abuse of spiritual gifts, and serious errors about the doctrine of the resurrection—just a few very “minor” issues common in every church.

Paul begins the letter with the heart of the issue, their sin against *koinonia* (fellowship) because of their failure to understand Christ's Lordship and the place of His servants in kingdom authority.

I. The Significance of the *Name*

1. Paul's appeal to Christ's *name*

The use of the *name* was an appeal to Christ's *authority* (for example, note vv. 13 and 15 where Paul asked, “*Were you baptized in the name of Paul?*”—were any baptized in Paul's authority). When we pray in His name, we are asking God to grant our request by appealing to Christ's authority that gives us the right to do so (John 14:13; 5:43; Luke 10:17, 18).

2. Submission to the authority of the *name* demands an undivided church.

The unity they needed required them to be “*united in the same mind* [nous, the faculty of perception though spiritual comprehension] *and the same judgment* [gnome, the biblical opinion of what ought to be done based on that perception].”

Paul's concern for the Corinthian church was that “*all of [them] agree,*” all having the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).

This unity was being destroyed by foolish individual loyalty in favoring and preferring one servant over another. “*Each one of you says, ‘I follow Paul,’ or ‘I follow Apollos,’ or ‘I follow Cephas,’ or ‘I follow Christ.’ ‘Is Christ divided?’*”

Their great need was true Christian *fellowship* (*koinonia*, v. 9), participation in the life of Christ and the united work of living out Christ in community.

II. The Power of *Fellowship*

1. Christ intends that His churches function on the basis of *koinonia*, of which there are two aspects, *corporate* and *personal*.

a. The *corporate* aspect of *koinonia* (Acts 2:42)

b. There are two practical aspects of corporate *koinonia*:

- 1) Participation in the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:16, 17)
 - 2) Sharing in the work of ministry (Phil. 1:4–6; 2 Cor. 8:3–5; 1 John 1)
2. The *personal* aspect of *koinonia* (Phil. 3:10, 11)

We were called into the fellowship of His Son (v. 9). What a glorious privilege has been afforded us by grace. Like Paul, we, too, must pursue holiness by sharing in His sufferings.

This personal aspect of fellowship belongs to those who are “*enriched in him in all word [logos, knowledge of the Word] and all in knowledge [gnosis, Spirit enabled understanding of the Word]*” (v. 5). Thus, we will follow Christ, being helped and blessed by those whom the Lord brings in our path to help us in the Word and way.

What Can We Take Away?

1. “*It has been reported*”

We have a great need for people to take a stand for right and the personal responsibility to pursue correction of problems in the church. Paul received the information about the Corinthian problems from Cloe's people. Yes, some folks, concerned with what they witnessed, ratted on the church to Paul. The need for the church to be as close to right as possible requires the due diligence of all her members.

2. “*Is Christ divided?*”

Are we followers of Christ or followers of men? Denominational divisions usually resulted from prideful tendencies of people seeking to gain a following with distinctive teachings. These teachings were promoted by men whose names become attached to the denomination.

The New Testament warns against the doctrines of men: “*From among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert*” (Acts 20:30, 31).

We must be vigilant and obedient so that “we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs” (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan hates the church, and his goal is to dull the influence of the church by deceiving people and dividing them through teachings that are just a little off.