

Message #5

I Corinthians 1:10-17

Denominationalism is an attempt to subdivide believers in Jesus Christ according to different theological, religious, social, experiential and geographical distinctives.

Denominationalism is said to have begun at the Reformation in the 1500's. It is said that it greatly flourished in the 1700-1800's. But the true historical, biblical roots of the N.T. denominationalism lie in the church of Corinth.

The church of Corinth had been founded somewhere near the year A.D. 50, but by the year A.D. 56, when I Corinthians was written, the church was split.

BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST ARE NOT TO BE INDIVIDUALLY DIVISIVE, BUT ARE TO STRIVE FOR COLLECTIVE UNITY.

I Corinthians does teach that fellowship boundary lines are to be drawn. 5:11-13

I Corinthians does teach that doctrinal boundary lines are to be drawn. 10:20

I Corinthians DOES NOT teach that sectarian boundary lines are to be drawn.

PART #1 – Believers are exhorted to be unified in the church. **1:10**

The word “now” which begins the verse is a strong, adversative conjunction. What this means is “now,” in sharp contrast to the faithfulness of God—it is time to address your unfaithfulness.

Reality #1 - They were brothers. **1:10a**

Paul calls them “brethren” which means they were truly saved and truly in the family of God, but they also were truly fighting with each other.

Reality #2 - They were hurting the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. **1:10b**

Even though a person may win the fight, he ruins Christ's name.

Area #1 - There should be a striving for unity in speech. **1:10c**

The word “agree” literally reads “say the same thing.” This includes matters pertaining to doctrine, spirituality, fellowship and life.

Area #2 - There should be a striving for unity in thought. **1:10d**

The words “made complete in the same mind” are words which mean restore and repair the faulty divisive thinking which lacks a unified thinking, which is the complete way of thinking in God's mind. According to Paul, people who ARE NOT striving for unity are people with damaged minds.

Area #3 - There should be a striving for unity in judgment. **1:10e**

There are times when judgments need to be made. In the spiritual church there will be a strong unity about the decisions. When a church stands together in judgment, it makes a strong statement that this church is very serious about God and His Word.

PART #2 – Believers are exhorted because of divisions in the church. **1:11-12**

That word “quarrel” means there were verbal arguments in the church. Paul, in naming Chloe, who was very well-known in the Corinthian church, establishes that these contentions were not just rumors, they were facts. By use of the word “each” in **verse 12**, we can assume that all of the Corinthians were involved in these verbal wranglings and wars.

Sect #1 - There was the sect of Paul. **1:12a**

It is possible that those in this group were the ones leaning toward licentiousness.

Sect #2 - There was the sect of Apollos. **1:12b**

Apollos was an Alexandrian intellectual (Acts 18:24; 19:1). He was an eloquent speaker—very knowledgeable in the Bible. With Apollos’ Alexandrian background, it is very possible that this is the group who would have leaned toward intellectualism.

Sect #3 - There was the sect of Cephas. **1:12c**

Cephas was the name given to Peter by Jesus Christ (John 1:42). Peter was Jewish and he had some legalistic tendencies and with his background, it is possible that his group leaned toward legalism.

Sect #4 - There was the sect of Christ. **1:12b**

This is NOT a commendable group. This was a self-centered group who refused to submit to anyone. Apparently there was a group in the church who would piously say, “We follow only Jesus” (i.e. II Cor. 10:7). This was the group that probably leaned toward isolationism.

PART #3 – Believers are exhorted because of logical reasons for unity. **1:13-17**

Thought #1 - Think about Jesus Christ. **1:13**

Paul, by asking three questions which all expect a no answer, brings the focus back to Him.

Question #1 - Is Christ divided? **1:13a**

Question #2 - Was Paul crucified for you? **1:13b**

Question #3 - Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **1:13c**

Thought #2 - Think about my ministry. **1:14-17**

Obviously one of the major issues that was divisively causing splits in the church was the issue of baptism. When Paul writes **verse 16**, he is not having some mental lapse. Paul had baptized the house of Stephanas, however, not in Corinth. Stephanas was the first fruits of Achaia (I Cor. 16:15, 17). Probably Paul baptized him in Athens. Paul was NOT sent by Christ to baptize or to philosophize or to intellectualize; Paul came to preach. God specifically sent His man to Corinth to preach!

Augustine once said, as we paraphrase him, “Anyone can baptize but very few can accurately proclaim the Gospel of God. Paul was NOT called to the easy task of baptism; he was called to the difficult task of preaching.

Are we people, are we a church, who acts like the body of Jesus Christ or like the Corinthians?