

Gospel Implications, Part 1 - Unity (1 Corinthians 1:10-18)

For this communion Lord's Day I would ask you to please take the Word of our Lord and turn to the book of 1 Corinthians. The first Lord's Day of last month we looked at 1 Corinthians 15, the gospel implications of the resurrection and redemption. I want to continue on the first Lord's Day of each month studying what 1 Cor 15 calls of first importance. Let me remind you what Paul reminded them:

15:1 *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received...*[then he sums up the gospel]

We need to be reminded, brothers and sisters, of the gospel. That's the main reason we're to celebrate the Lord's Table, in remembrance of Christ and what He did in the gospel, and it's for self-examination, and application in relationships with the Lord and with His people. Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian church to remind them of the gospel and its implications for their lives. It's not just the facts of what Jesus did in the past (in His death, burial, resurrection, and appearance), it's also the foundation for what we do in the present.

Paul says the gospel is what you stand in (present tense). He gave them the gospel in the past, but he reminds them it's not just a door to get them in Christian life, it's more like the floor of the Christian life. We're not to move on from it and past it, we're always to stand on the gospel and to hold fast to it with both feet. It's foundational, of first importance, connecting every room. If there's no floor, you fall, if it's weak, you sink. We need to stand firm in a strong gospel.

What Paul does in this letter before he gets to chapter 15, an apex of gospel truth summarized in his writings, Paul shows how every part of this house of God that was out of line relates to the gospel. The Corinthian church had struggles where they were inconsistent with the gospel, where they'd gotten off its foundational first things.

Lord-willing we'll finish our verse-by-verse study in Revelation on the glory of the Lord this month, if He doesn't return first, but this Sunday and each communion Sunday I'll do special messages in the book of 1 Corinthians. As we do this in remembrance of Christ in the gospel, as chapter 11 says, we need to be reminded how His gospel grace is to be applied in the body by unity (chapter 1 today), preaching Christ (chapter 2, next month), each subject in this book.

1 Corinthians 1:1 *Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and **our brother** Sosthenes,* ² *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:*** ³ *Grace to you and peace from God **our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁴ *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the **grace** of God that was given you [look at v. 9] God is faithful, by whom you were called into the **fellowship** of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.* ¹⁰ *I appeal to you, **brothers**, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that **all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.*** ¹¹ *For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is **quarreling** among you, **my brothers.*** ¹² *What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."* ¹³ *Is Christ **divided**? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* ¹⁴ *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,* ¹⁵ *so that no one may say that you were baptized **in my name.*** ¹⁶ *(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)* ¹⁷ *For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach **the gospel**, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest **the cross of Christ** be emptied of its power.* ¹⁸ *For **the word of the cross** is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved **it is the power of God.***

The introduction to 1 Corinthians in the ESV Study Bible says this on the context: the book's theme 'covers a number of key topics. One theme emerges from these discussions, however, as Paul's dominant concern. Paul wants this church, divided because of the arrogance of its more powerful members, to work together for the advancement of the gospel. He wants them to drop their divisive one-upmanship, build up the faith of those who are weak, and witness effectively to unbelievers. [The city of] Corinth sat on the isthmus connecting the Greek mainland with the...peninsula. This location made it a flourishing crossroads for sea traffic...It was a place where many cultures and religions mingled...[its church Paul planted was] plagued with serious problems of division...and social snobbery (1:10...11:18 [divisions even at the Lord's Supper which was supposed to be unifying, sanctifying])... Paul felt compelled to write a substantial letter to Corinth, making the case that much of their conduct was out of step with the gospel. At the root of their disunity was an arrogance...incompatible with God's free gifts ...'

Our text today is v. 10-18 but as we always do, we needed to start with the context of what's before and what the overall purpose was in its original setting, then see its implications for our context and setting today. In our text Paul gives 3 gospel implications for unity:

1. The gospel should unite the family of Christ (v. 10-11)
2. The gospel should unite our focus on Christ (v. 12-18)

First, the gospel should unite the family of Christ (v. 10-11)

Notice Paul begins v. 10 addressing them as *brothers*. In the end of v. 11 he calls them *my brothers*. Think of the implications of that if you think of someone who is your physical brother. They're family for better or worse, you're family. What would you do for family in difficulty, death of loved ones? Do you see church as *my brothers*? First application for unity is we must think of church as real family

The footnote in my Bible says *brothers* includes sisters, the idea is siblings in the Lord Jesus. In this context it's not biological family, it's the spiritual family of Christ, *brethren* adopted by God through His only begotten Son. In the end of v. 1 Paul writes of his brother in Christ named Sosthenes, and he calls him *our brother*. In v. 2 Paul emphasizes the unity of every family of Christ, everyone in every place who truly calls on Jesus as their Lord, the end of v. 2 says Christ is *their Lord and ours*. v. 3 calls God *our Father*. In v. 9 Paul reminds them of a faithful God called them into *fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*. We're a fellowship and family that live together under Christ, that's why unity and harmony is key

We don't know who *Chloe's people* were in v. 11, but we know in our own experience in families and church families about conflict. Families feud, fight, friendly fire wounds its own. One writer says:

'Quarrels are a part of life. We grow up in them and around them. Infants are quick to express displeasure when they are not given something they want or when something they like is taken away. Little children cry, fight, and throw tantrums because they cannot have their own ways. We argue and fight over a rattle, then a toy, then a football, then a position on the football team or in the cheerleading squad, then in business ... or politics. Friends fight, husbands and wives fight, businesses fight ... And the source of all the fighting is the same [James 4 says it's not getting what I want]

... When two or more people are bent on having their own ways, they will soon be quarreling and arguing, because their interests, concerns, and priorities sooner or later will conflict ...

Few things demoralize, discourage, and weaken a church as much as bickering, backbiting, and fighting among its members. And few things so effectively undermine its testimony ... the Father is dishonored, the Son is disgraced, His people are demoralized and discredited, and the world is turned off and confirmed in unbelief. Fractured fellowship robs Christians of joy and effectiveness, robs God of glory and robs the world of the true testimony of the gospel

... Among [this NT] church's many sins and shortcomings, quarreling is the one that Paul chose to deal with first. In unity lies the joy of Christian ministry and credibility of [gospel] testimony. ... The first need of the Corinthian church was for that sort of harmony. It is also the need of many churches today.' (*MNTC*, 24)

Here at GCBC, I'm thankful we don't have the disunity I read about in 1 Corinthians or that you hear about in other churches, but some here have experienced it in past churches, some wounds still hurt years later. We've experienced fewer all-out attacks, but we know from later in Corinthians that our enemy Satan wants to attack any moment he can, and his usual method of attack is from within the flock (chapter 10, v. 10 warns against grumbling as deadly danger)

Every moment, every church needs to heed warnings of disunity as disagreements can quickly turn into disputes or disparaging others. Disappointment, dissatisfaction or discouragement in the church, if not careful can turn divisive to dissension, to disrespect, disregard, disdain leaders or the Lord's people. Discontent breeds discontent. It isn't just a struggle with flesh and blood, Paul says, it's spiritual warfare and we need spiritual weaponry and armory. We're not to stand alone or we're an easy target for the fiery arrows of the devil. The analogy of the shield of faith isn't emphasizing a solo soldier; as flaming arrows flew, Roman soldiers bound themselves together joining their body-length shields together to be protected. We need feet firmly fitted with the gospel of peace, standing firm digging in the gospel, with helmet of salvation (mind guarded by gospel truth)

In v. 10 Paul urges or exhorts them to agree and not be divided, but to be united in the gospel. Your translation may say at the end of v. 10 *'that you be perfectly united in mind and thought'* or NKJV says *'perfectly joined'* or NASB has *'made complete in the same mind...'* What mind is that? I think chapter 2, v. 16 tells us, the end of 2:16: *'the mind of Christ.'* Christians must think like Christ, not the world and its ways, or its so-called wisdom. Christ wants us to judge and think rightly, and He gives His mind through His Word and Spirit.

Where Jesus has revealed Himself in the gospel, where Christ has spoken in the gospel, Christ-followers must all *say the same thing*. That's what the word *agree* means in v. 10 (NASB footnote says in v. 10 *agree* means 'Lit *speak the same thing*' and NKJV translates it literally that way with other footnote 'have a uniform testimony'). We have different stories of conversion but a uniform testimony of salvation, as v. 2 says of all who call in true faith on Jesus as Lord.

Does Paul think it's possible every churchgoer will agree on every secondary point, is it essential that we do? v. 10 doesn't mean that, but Paul does urge them to all agree on the essentials, to all have a uniform testimony of salvation by grace alone through Christ alone and to all speak the same things of the gospel. Disagreeing in other areas is ok and even healthy, if we keep main things the main thing

The main things we believe are things like what we just sang about

We believe in God the Father, We believe in Christ the Son
 We believe in the Holy Spirit, We are the Church and we stand as one
 We believe in the Holy Bible, We believe in the virgin birth
 We believe in the resurrection, That Christ one day will return to earth ...
 We believe in the blood of Jesus, We believe in eternal life
 We believe in the blood that frees us, To become the Bride of Christ
 Holy, holy, holy is our God, Worthy, worthy, worthy is our King
 All glory and honor Are His to receive To Jesus we sing because we believe

Those sort of things we put in 'What We Believe - The Essentials.'
 If you go to the What We Believe page of our website or the info table, it's a 1-page summary of truth we consider primary centering on the gospel and a high view of God and His Word with 5 Solas:
 - Sola Scriptura: *Scripture Alone* is our ultimate authority and standard
 - Soli Deo Gloria: *To God Alone be Glory*, none to us, in salvation and all of life
 - Sola Gratia: salvation is *By Grace Alone*, all of God, nothing of man
 - Sola Fide: saving grace is received *through faith alone*, not of works or merit
 - Solo Christo: *Christ alone* is Savior and should be ultimate focus of all we do

Those banners we want to fly highest here. I want to trumpet those truths the loudest. I pray God and His gospel is always on display, and a high view of Scripture also compels us to preach the whole counsel of God, to declare all of it and not shrink back, Genesis to Revelation (and we've literally preached through both recently). As I conclude Rev 22 this month, our next verse-by-verse series is the upper room discourse in John 13-17, for at least this summer in the AM, and in the PM this summer the love chapter (1 Cor 13), tying everything to the gospel. We have a SS class on gospel in OT, SS elective focus is changed to follow essentials, solas/what we teach.

Is there a basis for seeing some truth more essential or weightier? Jesus Himself said love is one of the *weightier matters* of His Law (Mt 23:23). Heb 6 speaks of *elementary* or *foundational* truths like repentance, faith, baptism, the resurrection, eternal judgment, etc. In this very letter 1 Cor 15 gives the gospel place of *1st importance*. So all God's truth is important, and we shouldn't avoid any of it so people don't get offended, but we should put most emphasis where Scripture does, and speak all truth in love, as that's the weightiest and first and greatest point of the OT, illustrated in the NT gospel.

A church family may not all agree on every secondary issue, but I think the spirit of v. 10 is agreeing not to have divisions over them. It's ok to have questions but v. 11 says it's not ok to have *quarrels*. If you have questions of what we teach or do, please come to us as leaders privately (there's always one up front after the service and other elders are available), but please don't proselytize here (try to convert people to what you believe differently than what we teach) and don't make personal views and preferences debates or divisive.

[keep the gospel at the center, brothers and sisters]

We don't have to agree on family choices for kids, school, or even what church family leaders do. We agree not to divide, to unite in Christ. Our members don't have to be covenantal or dispensational (good for me, because I don't pledge allegiance to either) and most don't even know what those mean! But I trust you all want to be *Biblicists*. You don't have to be a calvinist or a premillennialist, you don't even have to call yourself a Baptist (that may surprise/shock) but I see myself as a *Biblicist* with a capital 'b' while other things I believe I would put in lower-case. We teach believer's baptism but I enjoy fellowship with Presbyterians and want to bathe everything in love. We teach the doctrines of grace but grace also motivates us to extend grace to others. I don't define our church by labels, what defines us is Christ as Christians with a capital "C," it's *His* gospel.

[I'm a Christian who's a member of a baptist church, little 'b']

Do we have to all agree on everything in Revelation to fellowship with each other? I don't think so, and I'm not aware of any group in the first 19 centuries of church history that felt that way, even big categories like millennial views are left open in confessions of the past, though some were more specific on the antichrist than I prefer (we intentionally keep our what we believe/what we teach general)

What do we believe as a church about the end? Our Essentials says

'We believe in the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth and the establishment of His kingdom in its final form.'

We believe there will be a final resurrection with eternal judgment of God on the unbeliever in Jesus Christ and on Satan and his angels, and that there will be eternal blessedness for the believer.' [now if you don't believe in a real resurrection or return or that hell is eternal punishment, that's a problem, Heb 6 calls those foundational but not the lesser details]

I've taught God has a future for Israel with other nations and Jesus will return to renew and reign, but even there What We Teach says 'For us, full agreement on some of the finer points of doctrine (ex: timing of rapture or exact nature of the millenium/kingdom after Christ returns) are not requirements for membership, fellowship, leadership, or ministry partnerships with others who share our high view of God, His Word, and the gospel, **and who agree not to be divisive or to speak or teach here contrary to our doctrinal convictions** (2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:1-2; 1 Pet 3:8; Eph 4:2-7).'

~In essentials unity, in non-essentials humility, and in all things charity~

That's what we want to define this church family, and we welcome you to join who want to be submitted and committed to what we're about, or if you can't, unite to another gospel-loving church family

The gospel should unite the family of Christ, that's implication #1.

A 2nd implication: The gospel should unite our focus on Christ

In v. 12 Paul continues with how this church lost its focus on Jesus and became focused on people and personalities. Some say *I follow Paul* but others *I follow Apollos*. Later in these letters we read Paul wasn't an impressive speaker to the Corinthians while Apollos was an eloquent powerful preacher, Acts tells us. There's not a hint that they taught different doctrine (like people who say 'I'm of Calvin or Lutheran'). In v. 12 it wasn't a doctrinal divide, because *Cephas* in v. 12 (the Hebrew name for Peter) taught the same doctrine Paul taught, including sovereign grace in v. 26-31 (compare 1 Pet 1:2-5)

But even Peter found some of Paul's teachings hard to understand (2 Pet 3:15-16), and it seems the Corinthians let teacher preference become personality cults (I'm of this guy, I'm of this other guy). I spoke with Paul Washer a few years back and we've seen a lot of Washer-ites (which is not his desire), but there's MacArthur-ites or 'I like Sproul's view' or 'I'm of Piper, Dever,' etc. but those guys are all together for the gospel (and do a conference by that name). I love Shepherd's Conference this year, diversity but unity in Christ.

Paul asks in v. 13: *Is Christ divided? Was **Paul** crucified for you? Or were you baptized **in the name of Paul**?* [Paul knew they were baptized in the name of Jesus] ¹⁴ *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,* ¹⁵ *so that no one may say that you were baptized **in my name**.* ¹⁶ *(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)* ¹⁷ ***For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*** ¹⁸ ***For the word of the cross*** [that's another way to say the gospel] *is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*

The gospel is the power of God to us who are saved by it because it takes the focus off man, and puts it on Jesus humbled on a cross. On a smaller scale, it's humbling to give testimony of your sin and need of cleansing, as symbolized in the waters of baptism, but far more humiliating was a death of one naked, strung up for all to see and mock. This is the cross we survey on which the prince of glory died, so desire for gain we count but loss and pour contempt on all our pride. He died for sins of disunity, pride, focusing on people. His blood alone can wash us clean, that's what baptism symbolizes.

Paul clearly understood baptism wasn't the gospel, as important as baptism is in the great commission. Why else would Paul say I'm thankful I didn't baptize many of you (if baptism saved them, he'd be saying 'I'm thankful not many of you got saved'). Paul's calling was to proclaim salvation in the gospel of the cross of Christ, those who are saved by grace then are baptized in obedience as followers of Christ, but not as followers of Paul. It's for disciples of Christ.

To any disciples following Him as Lord who haven't been baptized since then, baptism is an important 1st step of obedience more than and before communion and observing all Jesus commanded (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 2:38-42). For young adults there's a study guide for dads. If you're not sure today if you're a disciple following Jesus as your Lord, my brother up front after service would love to talk.

For my brothers and sisters here, remember we are really brothers and sisters. The gospel creates the family of Christ and unites it in Christ. Think of your church family as your family this week, and let that implication flesh itself. Focus on Christ on the cross and let that move us to die to our will and desires and unite lifting Him up.