

Series in 1 Corinthians - #2

**United in the same mind and the same judgment**

Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 10-16

**Introduction**

The New Year is a time when many people take stock of where they are at, decide where they would like to get to, and often make some resolutions, which they quickly jettison once the real life of the rest of the year sets into motion.

The process of evaluation and then making a decision for mid course corrections IS a good thing. Putting those plans into practice needs **the grace of God** as well as **the willful decision to be disciplined** in the practice of the changes being put into place.

In the case of the Corinthian fellowship this was clearly a church that was not living up to its potential. As we already noted they were enriched in Christ in speech and knowledge, Christ's testimony had been confirmed among them – there must have been some marvelous conversion stories, they had all the spiritual gifts operating in their midst and they were looking forward to Christ's return. So what was the impediment?

Well, **they were human beings**, just as we are. And thus **there were differences which had surfaced** among them. This is a normal thing in the life of any social group, of any volunteer organization and of any church. But ... the differences had led to quarrelling, and divisions were threatening.

So after his introduction Paul takes this issue on directly with great urgency and intensity. Let's look together at our text this morning and consider how we can be united in the same mind and same judgement.

**THE CURSE OF DIVISION**

Paul continues in verse 10 “I **appeal to you, brothers** - let me stop here for a moment – that can be translated ‘brothers and sisters’ for the Greek word ‘**adelphoi**’ refers to siblings in a family. So in New Testament usage *depending on the context*, adelphoi may refer to men or to **both** men and women who are siblings [brothers and sisters] in God’s family, the church. This applies also in both verses 11 and 26.

**‘I appeal to you brothers and sisters 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.’**

Why does he consider that this is such an important issue –what is the curse of division that he should address it up front?

- Division **DISHONOURS** the name of Christ

Think about how Christ prayed that His people would be one in John 17 – He died that we would be together with Him in heaven forever, and He sent His spirit to guide us into the knowledge and practice of speaking the truth in love on earth –

- Division **DISMANTLES** the work of Christ

When we see a building in the process of being dismantled – we recognize that at one time it was new, functional and useful. Somehow, getting into disrepair, it is no longer useful or healthy and functional and so in falling apart it is then taken apart. The same is true of the work of Christ.

- Division **DISGUSTS** the enemies of Christ

Think of how many people – likely some of our own children and grandchildren – have been soured on the gospel and the life of Christian fellowship because of the division that they have experienced or watched in their growing up years. All of us in our witnessing know how hard it is to reach people who have watched such issues at close hand.

- Division **DISCOURAGES** the servants of Christ.

It is disheartening to be in the midst of people and situations where those sharing the same faith are at loggerheads with each other without resolution. It sucks the life out of people, like having a maple tree tapped, but in this case it is the energy and enthusiasm that energizes that is easily gone and leads to discouragement.

- Division **DISORGANIZES** the church of Christ.

Instead of having a strong united witness with the resources functioning like a mighty army, we end up with many different little militias functioning without a common communication system.

- Division **DISAPPOINTS** the Spirit of Christ

Ephesians 4:29-32 <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

## THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

The **STRATEGY OF SATAN** [2 Corinthians 2:11] <sup>11</sup> so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Here Paul speaks of Satan's strategy in the whole context of the issue of the discipline of the man who was sexually immoral we find in 1 Corinthians in relation to his restoration in 2 Corinthians.

Satan's strategy is:

- To **EXPLOIT**

He looks at the natural inclinations of individuals, and he uses those weaknesses, those hurts, those opportunities to enter in and create enmity, strife, confusion and discord. He puts oxygen on the fire, so to speak, or sand on the gears. The Scripture tells

us not to let the sun go down on our anger as it gives Satan an entrance point.

- To **EXPLODE**

He loves to take small things and explode them into big crises, or to let our minds begin to dwell on things until people explode from frustration or stress or the burdens that they have picked up. Satan is an opportunist to sneak in and use the opportunities.

### **THE STUPIDITY OF SAINTS**

Now I hope that all of us as parents have taught our children never to call anyone stupid, and that we practice that – for in our culture it has the context or implication of being a less than valuable person. However, it has a real technical definition which applies here. The definition of this word in one dictionary is: **a poor ability to understand or to profit from experience.** So to be stupid is to fail to understand what is really happening, or to fail to learn from previous experience so that you repeat the behaviour or error. So when we do something that we know better than we should have done, to say to ourselves that was really stupid of me is actually true!

There are at least three ways that Paul indicates to the Corinthians that they contribute to the cause of division in their stupidity.

- **MAKING CONVICTIONS INTO CONTENTIONS**

1 Corinthians 1:11 <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

Now do not think for one millisecond that I am even remotely suggesting that any believer should not have convictions. We have a series that you can find on our website of messages entitled CONVICTIONS THAT COUNT, which I preached in 2010. I have actually placed some copies of those in the foyer.

But not all convictions that Christians hold are foundational Christian doctrines that determine orthodoxy or whether one is in the faith.

So, when we impose our convictions upon others and make our convictions a test of their rightness or wrongness we can very easily lead into the kinds of contentions that Paul is dealing with in Corinth.

- **MAKING PERSONALITIES INTO PARTIES**

**1 Corinthians 1:12** <sup>12</sup> 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.”]

It is very easy to be influenced by a mentor, a teacher, a preacher, a Christian music group and to begin to elevate that person or group to status that usurps Christ’s in our common life. We are prone to respond to those we like and to like those we have responded to.

I have been influenced by a number of wonderful teachers and Christian leaders throughout my life, and they have certainly had powerful influence – but none of them was perfect, none of them was right all the time and none of them was to take precedence over the headship of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit in understanding and applying God’s Word. I still can remember my dad coming home from prayer meetings when I was a child, and saying something like: “Well, Mr. Parsonage said tonight that this is what Dr. Barnhouse said.” And I believe that way back there he taught me to be discerning, and not to raise personalities into parties that we follow and hold too high.

- **MAKING MOLEHILLS INTO MOUNTAINS**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3** <sup>1</sup> But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Christian people are to be mature and discerning. They are to show deference to others and hold others in high esteem. The example of our Lord was being humble while being meek – not weak. Jealousy and strife indicate that the Holy Spirit does not have control of our lives and we are functioning in the flesh – and in that case, no matter the validity of our cause, the Lord will be working to correct us, to mature us, rather than to help us in our striving.

## **THE CURE OF DIVISION**

### **1. Clarify the issues**

**1 Corinthians 1:11** <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

How do you begin to cure division? You begin by actually clarify the issues involved rather than side with either one or groups of the quarrelers. There are always underlying issues, which may or may not be related to the contention. That is where you must start.

How did Paul know about this except that Chloe's people were saying that there is quarrelling.

### **2. Identify the problems**

**1 Corinthians 3:3** <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Once you know the issues, then begin to identify the actual problems that are causing the offence, creating the strife, leading to the misunderstanding.

### **3. Rectify the ills**

**1 Corinthians 1:10** <sup>10</sup> 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.

There must be a commitment within the body to the rectification of the ills – with the understanding that there may not always be agreement among all the parties, but having truth and grace prevail so that love can abound over all is the goal.

- a. Speaking - people have to talk with one another
- b. Thinking – this must not be based on emotion, but rather on a genuine thoughtfulness of the real issues and the best course of action
- c. Deciding – at some point a decision must be made on what to do to resolve the division, or contention
- d. Healing – there must be a place for tears, for confession, for time to absorb the change or solution and reintegration of those who are in the divisive state.

#### **4. Specify the priorities**

1 Corinthians 1:13 <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

- **BATTLES DON'T BUILD THE BODY**
- **THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS STILL CENTRAL**
- **THE MASTER MATTERS – MORE THAN MEN**

### **CONCLUSION AND COMMITMENT**