

I CORINTHIANS 1:10-17
A CALL FOR UNITY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Corinthians chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Corinth.

If you remember from our last study, Paul starts out with greetings and his thanksgiving for these believers. Paul wrote, **"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus."** I Corinthians 1:4.

That was the good they were doing but then there was the bad and the ugly!

And the first issue that Paul is going to deal with is the divisions that were occurring within the church. And as crazy as that sounds, what was taking place in the early church, continues to happen today!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

There was this man who was marooned, alone, on an uncharted island.

Year after year went by and there was no hope for anyone to rescue him.

Then, after several years a passing ship happened to see his fire one night and changed course to investigate.

When some of the crew made their way by boat to the island, they found the man and three huts that he had built.

They asked him, ***"What are these three huts?"***

He answered, ***"One is where I live."***

"Okay, then what is the other hut for?" they asked him.

"That is the one where I go to church."

Then it came down to the last hut and they asked him, ***“We understand that one hut was where you live. One hut is where you go to church. But what then is that last hut for?”***

His response was this, ***“Oh, that one, that’s where I used to go to church.”***

Now we laugh at that because it is so foolish. And yet, we see many foolish reasons why people leave the church, but not only leave the church, but cause divisions within the church and that is what Paul is going to deal with here in I Corinthians!

Please understand this. If the pastor is teaching false doctrine, you need to talk with him. Explain your concern with him.

And if he continues on teaching false doctrine you move on and find a church that is teaching the Word of God without compromise or false doctrine.

You don’t cause division within the church.

Again, like with false teaching and false teachers being spoken of in many of the letters in the New Testament, we also see divisions and fighting spoken of.

And the call is for reconciliation.

The problem today is that people move from church to church because something was said that hurt their feelings. Or someone did this to them.

And you see that this happens over and over again in their lives. What is the problem?

I hate to say it, but the problem is ***THEM!***

And think about the witness to unsaved family and friends as they see you moving from church to church to church. And they must think, ***“That is why I don’t go to church. Look at all the problems they have!”***

And as these people go from church to church what are they looking for?

They are looking for that perfect church and I will let you in on a little secret. There is no perfect church!

I know that may be shocking to you and you may be wondering why I feel that way.

Well, the answer is simple. The reason that there are no perfect churches is because they are filled with people!

Please don't be offended by that, it is just a reality.

One writer put it like this in regard to strife and divisions. He wrote,

“Strife brings fractured fellowship into the church of Jesus Christ, which robs Christians of joy and effectiveness. It robs God of glory, and it robs the world of the true testimony of the gospel - a high price for an ego trip.”

It robs Christians of joy and effectiveness, it robs God of glory, and it robs the world of a genuine authentic testimony of who Jesus Christ is in the world today.

I think, and I hope that you agree with me, when I say . . . that there are few things other than strife in the church that will demoralize Christians, that will discourage them, drag them down, will weaken the church of Jesus Christ.

One of the biggest problems we face today in Christendom in the West does not come from that big bad world outside that we're all so afraid of, but it comes from within!

Bickering, backbiting, fighting - few things so effectively undermine the testimony of the gospel before the world than the behavior of believers who are quarrelling and fighting among themselves . . .

Divisiveness, and of course the problem of divisiveness is the problem of people.

You go to your work - maybe you don't work, but you live in a neighborhood, you rub shoulders with people day by day - and you've heard the saying that where people are there will be problems, and that is exactly the same in the church of Jesus Christ.

We've got problems because we're ordinary people with ordinary problems, and we're just sinners, we're trying to conform ourselves by the Spirit of God more to the image of Christ day by day as we get to glory - but we're still people, we're still human beings! . . .

Now people get this idea of Christian unity that we have to surrender our minds up to somebody else, that we have to give our wills over to some church leader, and we're not allowed to think any more for ourselves, and somebody else acts on our behalf.

That is the thing of cults, strange Eastern religions, that is not the unity that Christ speaks of in His word - the unity in the Spirit.

It's not some kind of dictatorship, but it is a unity nevertheless, but a unity that is based on the common leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ - a surrender not to a human being alone, but a surrender to Him, to His word, and to His Spirit as His Spirit guides us through the word to its precepts and principles.

Let me illustrate it to you like this: in 1887 a very famous musician by the name of Leopold Damrosch organized a musical festival in the city of New York. He trained so many groups, there was going to be a massive orchestra that would come to this festival, and singers that were going to join in, that he had to train them in various different cities at different times, all separated.

There was a choir in New York, there was a choir in Brooklyn, in Newark, in Philadelphia, and Albany - and they were all drilled separately and taught separately, and trained, but they were all brought to concert perfection in their abilities.

When they were all brought together into New York for that final grand finale of a festival and celebration concert, they all sang in perfect harmony - what was the reason?

Because they were all drilled by the same leader to the same pitch and the same note.

When that is done there will be harmony! As Paul says in verse 10, we will be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.

- <https://bit.ly/4hDtijK>

That is the problem, we still have this flesh nature that we carry around with us and that gets in the way of unity.

But don't be discouraged because here is the key to our unity. It is what Paul wrote in the verses we looked at last time.

In I Corinthians 1:6-9 we are told, **“even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

The key is Jesus and our submission to Him. His will in the situations we face and not ours. We need to have unity in Christ, or our witness will be lost, and it has been lost many times! And we will see that as we close our study this morning, the answer is always – ***JESUS!***

And that is what Paul is dealing with here and I have called this study – ***A CALL TO UNITY!***

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

UNITY – I CORINTHIANS 1:10

DIVISIONS AMONG THE BRETHREN – I CORINTHIANS 1:11-13

NO ROOM FOR BOASTING – I CORINTHIANS 1:14-16

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE FOCUS – I CORINTHIANS 1:17

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 10 and let's see what the Lord has for us in regard to – ***UNITY!***

I CORINTHIANS 1

VERSE 10

I found this interesting. In the first 10 verses of this letter Paul speaks of Jesus 10 times!

Why?

Because, before he speaks of the problem in the church at Corinth, he is giving to them the solution, he is giving to them ***JESUS*** because, like I have said, He is always the solution!

It is when we get our eyes off of Jesus and onto self that we lose sight of Jesus and what He desires us to do.

What happens then?

Then we become selfish, self-seeking, self-motivated, self-consumed and so on.

The solution again, more of Jesus and less of self, the flesh, because self needs to be crucified!

Paul put it like this in Ephesians 5:21, **“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

Why do we have so many relationship problems?

Why do we see so many marriages struggling?

Why do we see conflict between children and their parents?

Why do we see such animosity, so much bitterness between employers and employees?

Why do we see so much division in the church?

Because, like it or not, agree with it or not, you are not **“submitting to one another in the fear of God.”**

And that is what Paul was dealing with there in the church in Corinth, divisions!

Paul opened up in a gentle way but now he is going to deal with the problems in the church in a strong way.

The problem, like I have said, is division in the church and Paul is calling for unity.

Now there are a few things I need to speak about regarding unity.

First of all, some believe this means that we are to accept what everyone and anyone says. There is no one who is wrong and whatever you believe is okay.

That is not what Paul is saying here, and I will show you that in a minute.

Let’s face it, the church is never called to have us all think alike! That would be crazy and that is a cult where you have no freedom to think.

Now, in saying that, what is this unity based upon?

Paul tells us that we are to be of **“the same mind.”**

Remember what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5, **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

And we don’t have to guess what Paul is thinking here because he goes on to give us the example of Jesus there in Philippians chapter 2.

He freely gave up His rights and privileges, He submitted Himself to the direction of God the Father, even though Jesus is Almighty God Himself and thus, humble yourself, be submissive to the Lord, don't fight and bring about divisions in the church or in your life!

Paul put it like this in Philippians 2:1-4, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

Put on the mind of Christ and treat others as Christ would. And being like-minded is holding onto the foundational truths of the Bible!

But in Corinth, there was no unity, they were not humbling themselves before the Lord, it was about them.

And because it was about them, we saw these problems in the church in Corinth. Paul says that there were *divisions, schisms*.

The Greek word means to “*tear*” or to “*rend*.”

In other words, the church in Corinth were ripping each other apart, they were tearing up the body of Christ for their own selfish reasons and Paul says that should not be!

Instead, you should be like-minded, have the same focus, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what Paul said about the Galatians, **“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.”** Galatians 5:15.

Again, we are not going to agree on everything.

But if you are fighting and causing division for your cause, then your focus is wrong, and you need to stop.

Maybe that makes some of you angry and you think that you have every right to believe what you do!

I am not saying you don't have that right, but when you are dividing the church for your cause, that is wrong. I hope you understand that.

And if you don't, maybe this will help as Jesus prayed before He went to the cross to die for our sins, **“that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”** John 17:21.

What did Jesus pray for?

Our ***UNITY!***

And what did I say our solution to these issues in our life is?

The solution is Jesus, but, sad to say, there in Corinth it was their own ideas that were more important than Jesus, and that is never a good thing.

So we see that Paul spoke of divisions, and that was wrong.

Then it says what they should be doing as they put on the mind of Christ, and they are to be **“joined together.”**

This Greek Word was a medical term relating to putting bones back together that were broken or fractured.

Thus, the idea here is putting back together or to make one again that which was broken or separated, relationships within the body of Christ!

You see, this tearing apart of the body is not natural in the body of Christ, at least it shouldn't be, and it is not what God desires! Thus, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, put on the mind of Christ and heal those relationships!

Now, the big question here is this, ***“What was the big problem in Corinth that brought about these things that were ripping the church apart?”***

Paul is going to tell us as we read on!

But what we have seen here is Paul spoke on – ***UNITY!***

But now the focus is on the – ***DIVISIONS AMONG THE BRETHREN!***

VERSES 11-13

Keep in mind that Paul wrote this letter somewhere between A. D. 54 to A. D. 56 and Paul wrote this letter when he was in Ephesus. So this is a very early letter and look at what was taking place already in the church – divisions, quarrels, contentions!

And Paul found out about these things from the household of Chloe who went to visit Paul with these concerns about the church.

And they are telling Paul, maybe through a letter and word of mouth, that there is trouble in Corinth with a capital ***“T”***.

They allowed their differences to divide up the body of Christ, cause quarrels, contentions and they used names to back up their cause – to justify their actions, and what a sad picture that is being painted here.

Notice what they are saying – ***I AM OF PAUL!***

In other words, ***“Remember the time that this man of God stayed with us. The one who taught us the things of God. Taught us about Jesus. The one who founded the church. We are following what he has told us and remember; he is an apostle. So back off, we are right with God because we are following Paul!”***

Then there was the group in the church that said – ***I AM OF APOLLOS!***

In other words, ***“We are following an eloquent man and one who is mighty in the Scriptures. He was a man with great power and thus, we are truly the ones who are right with God. Not like all of you!”***

But it does not end there. We also see the ones who claimed – ***I AM OF CEPHAS!***

In other words, ***“Hey, say what you want but we have the guy, we follow Peter! He was the one who walked on water and saw the Lord transfigured before him! He was one of the first of the apostles and not like Paul who was just an apostle to the Gentiles! He is the man, and we are following him. We are the ones who are really right with God!”***

It is amazing all these different groups they had, and there is one more and these guys thought that they had it now, they were better than all the rest!

These are the ones who claimed – ***I AM OF CHRIST!***

They were thinking, ***“You guys are so carnal, and you are following after mere men. Not us, we are following after Jesus. He is the LORD GOD Almighty! It does not get any better than that! We can’t understand how you are not following Jesus like us. If you did, then like us, you would be right with God!”***

But, if they were following Jesus there would be no strife between them!

Now some feel that these were not the actual people that these groups were following after, but they feel that it was probably people in the congregation, and they used these names so as not to put them down.

I don't see it that way and the reason being is that Paul was not afraid to name names! We see it in many of his letters!

The issue here is not that following Paul was wrong, or Apollos was wrong, or Cephas was wrong, or even Jesus was wrong, because it is not!

The problem was that they were self-centered, and they were name dropping to show how spiritual they really were!

Sandy Adams wrote regarding this because these issues were not just here in Corinth or the early church, they are here even today.

This is what he wrote,

Certainly, there are issues worth fighting for - and on those issues I'll lead the charge. But all too often churches end up majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors. We fight over petty, picky, piddly stuff . . .

Christians divide over baptism, do we dunk or sprinkle?

Do we take communion weekly or once a quarter?

Do we read from the King James or a newer translation?

[Do] we sing hymns or praise songs?

[Do we] use a steel pulpit or one made of wood?

It's trivial stuff.

I read the story of Paul Loetz. Paul took a terrible fall. He punctured a lung, broke a few ribs, was bleeding internally.

He was rushed to the hospital. While lying in the emergency room, Paul heard two doctors arguing over who would put the tube into his crushed chest.

The argument became a shoving match. One doctor threatened to have the security guards remove the other doctor . . . Finally, Paul managed to cry out, ***“Please, somebody, save me!”***

Two other doctors had to step in and settle the dispute.

And this can happen in a church. God brings hurting people through our doors, but we’re too busy trying to out-do, or upstage each other, to provide them help.

That’s what was occurring in the church at Corinth.

- Sandy Adams, I Corinthians 1:11

Can you imagine two doctors fighting with each other while their patient is there in need of care! And that truly is what was going on here in Corinth and it is nothing more than carnality!

There are people that need to be cared for, ministries to help people, and yet, we fight and argue, and we are not ministering to the body of Christ because it is all about us!

And by acting carnal, as the Corinthian church was, Paul tells them you are dividing Christ when we are supposed to be one in Christ!

And this Greek word for **“contentions”** is ***ERIS***, and Eris was the goddess of strife and wrangling, interestingly enough. This is what was going on in the church.

Some sided with Paul, others with Apollos, and there was some who followed Cephas, and then there were some who said they followed Jesus! Talk about name droppers!

For me, I have seen this.

I actually had someone tell me, because I did not follow the Law for salvation but believe we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, that I was following after Paul while he, being more spiritual of course, followed Jesus!

Foolishness and isn't that exactly what we see here?

Paul says to them that they are not spiritual, but carnal!

Let me say this. We may differ on some non-essentials, and that should not be a problem, like it was here in Corinth.

But on essentials, I am not backing down and neither should you!

I believe that is what Paul means when he says that we are to have the same mind, the mind of Christ.

Maybe you heard the story of the old, very contentious Quaker who went from one church to another church never finding the ***"True"*** church he was looking for.

One day someone was bold enough to ask him, ***"Well, what church are you in now?"***

He replied back, ***"I am in the true church at last."***

"Really," said the man, ***"How many belong to it?"***

The Old Quaker replied back, ***"Just my wife and myself, and I am not sure about her sometimes."***

Funny, yes, but not right!

Here's the thing. We have had people come to this church and then move on to another church. Praise the Lord if they are being fed. There is no perfect church and some don't like the way that I teach and thus, they hear another pastor, and they are blessed.

It is not about me, it is not about you, it is about Jesus and surrendering to Him and not being haughty or proud or superior in our thinking.

I think you should love being in a fellowship, and there are many out there for you to grow in the Lord. Praise God! It may be the style of teaching, it may be the style of worship, but whatever it is, be in the will of God in where you are worshiping!

And as I have said, there is room for disagreements in the church, but not on foundational doctrines. We must be in agreement there.

And yet, that is where the church is missing the point. They focus on the little issues, non-essential issues and throw the foundational truths away.

Remember, ***“In essentials - unity; in non-essentials - liberty; in all things - charity.”***

Now we may wonder, ***“How can this church in Corinth act this way? What is wrong with them?”***

But the Lord is telling us, ***“What was happening in Corinth happens in churches today. These lessons are for you today and not just for them!”***

I shared some of these with you before, but just listen to what some actual fights in churches were all about.

- ***A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer*** (I just want to know who took the pictures.)
- ***A dispute over whether the worship leader should have his shoes on during the service*** (I vote for shoes, shirts and pants.)
- ***A dispute in the church because the Lord’s Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice*** (Of course it should be grape juice. It’s right there in Hezekiah 4:11.)
- ***Two different churches reported fights over the type of coffee. In one of the churches, they moved from Folgers to a stronger Starbucks brand. In the other church, they simply moved to a stronger blend. Members left the church in the latter example*** (Perhaps they started a new church: The Right Blend Fellowship.)
- ***Major conflict when the youth borrowed a crock-pot that had not been used for years*** (I bet it was a bunch of crotch old adults.)

- *An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal* (Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert.)
- *A disagreement over using the term "potluck" instead of "pot blessing"* (I get it! The concept of luck contradicts the theology of a sovereign God. This issue is very serious. Good luck trying to resolve it.)
- *Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split.* (Thus the Second Electrolux Church was born.)
- *An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not* (I thought gluttony was a sin.)
- *A dispute over whether the church should allow people to wear black T-shirts, since black is the color of the devil* (Are you sure he's not red? That's what I've heard.)

- <https://bit.ly/3QlxacT>

Again, we laugh at that, but these are not fake stories. These things actually happened in churches, and it caused division, splits, arguments. How sad that is!

Again, like Paul wrote, **"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"** I Corinthians 1:13.

We need a correct perspective of things when there are these divisions among the brethren. It is not about any man, but it truly is about the God-Man, Jesus Christ. Thus, if we are part of the body of Christ, why are we dividing?

That is a great question. There really is no reason to divide unless it is about false doctrine and really not division, but moving on if the situation is not resolved! We should not be dividing the church, that is not right.

And listen to what James tells us that these things come from and yes, it is a difficult few verses for us to take in.

In James 4:1-2 James tells us, **“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.”**

Where do these wars and fights come from?

It comes from what you want, what you desire, for your pleasure and not of God. That is what was going on in Corinth and Paul wanted to correct that so the work of Jesus Christ can move forward.

So we have seen that there were – ***DIVISIONS AMONG THE BRETHREN!***

As we read on, we will be looking at – ***NO ROOM FOR BOASTING!***

VERSES 14-16

Paul does not pull any punches here but exposes their carnality.

How did he do that?

He did that by showing that their actions were not right. And it seems that when they were name dropping some of them were speaking of who baptized them.

Please understand that Paul is not minimizing baptism, but he is putting it into its proper perspective, you might say.

Why did he do that?

Because, again, they were boasting about who baptized them.

Think about it.

“I was baptized by Apollos!”

“That is nothing, I was baptized by Paul!”

And it goes on and it is foolishness!

Now let me say this because there are some who say that if you are not baptized, and specifically, for some churches, if you are not baptized by them, you are not saved!

Let me first say this. The power of baptism is not seen in who does the baptizing but in the spiritual reality it represents and as an act of obedience to the Lord on our part.

The other issue is that they were self-seeking, self-serving, self-absorbed and they needed to die to self instead of feeding the ugly monster.

And isn't that what baptism represents, the death to the old life as you are placed under the water and as you are raised up you are a new creation in Christ! But we are not seeing that in some of these Corinthian believers!

The other issue is that baptism does not save a person, Jesus is the Savior!

But for these Corinthians, they were boasting about this person they knew and that person they knew, thinking it made them an important person!

But again, they needed to die to self and yet, the problem for these Corinthians was this did not become a reality in their life even though they knew the truth.

They needed to do as Paul said in Romans 12:1-2, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."**

And, of course, we truly need to do this on a daily basis for if we don't give our lives to God, we will see the flesh grow and get in the way of what God wants to do.

So Paul tells us that he did not baptize that many people. One of them was Crispus. And he could be the leader or ruler of the Synagogue in Corinth who got saved in Acts 18:8.

Then he speaks of Gaius, who could be the host that Paul spoke of in Romans 16:23, the place where Paul stayed when he was in Corinth and from where he wrote his letter to the Romans.

And if you think baptism is needed for salvation, as you read what Paul said here, I think Paul clearly shows us that it is not essential for salvation!

Yes, the Lord commands us to be baptized but not for salvation, that is a free gift of God that we receive by faith.

If baptism was necessary for salvation Paul would have traveled with a portable baptismal and he would be dunking all who came to the Lord, but he didn't do that.

What was Paul's focus?

Bringing to people the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which has the power to save them!

One writer put it like this,

I often have people come up to me and they say, why don't you baptize people as soon as they accept Jesus Christ? Immediately I know that I am dealing with a person of the Church of Christ, who keeps the baptismal warm. In case someone comes to Christ, they baptize them immediately because there is a belief of baptismal regeneration. That is, that they are not really saved until they are baptized. And I know that they are really not interested in the answer that I will give to them, because if you don't baptize immediately, you are wrong.

There is no way you can justify not baptizing a person immediately, in their mind.

But I will usually point them to this passage of Scripture that Paul wrote to the Corinthians, where Paul actually thanks God that he didn't baptize any of them but Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas.

And if there are any others, he doesn't remember because he said Christ did not call me baptize but to preach the gospel. Now if baptism is necessary for regeneration, then Paul is guilty of utmost blasphemy in making such a statement.

- Source Unknown

Exactly!

In James 4:16 we are told about boasting and the idea here is boasting about where we are going and what we are going to do. You see, it is all in the hands of God and our boasting should be in Him.

This is what James said, **"But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil."**

It is so easy to build ourselves up, to make us look good by the things we are doing.

But what is missing here?

The Lord for He is the One who has enabled you, enabled me to do the things we are doing!

We need to be careful with this, because boasting is really nothing more than pride as we make ourselves look important.

The thing we need to remember is that we are bondslaves of Jesus Christ and it is not about us. A slave does not boast about himself, but his master and our master is Jesus and thus, we boast about how great He is and not how great we are!

Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

Do you find yourself wanting to praise your accomplishments in the midst of a conversation?

The person you're conversing with hasn't had a moment to get a word in edgewise?

Putting down or belittling the accomplishments of others so yours appear to be more important?

Brag about your spiritual gifts?

Like to feel or appear important?

Like to seek a pat on the back for your accomplishments?

Leave a better impression with others than is true?

You have an inflated view of yourself?

Always have to be right – you have the expert opinion on everything.

Are you quick to defend your reputation?

Do you take credit when credit is really due to another?

There are many more areas we can list but . . . All of these come from a boastful and prideful heart. These do not come from a humble heart that is loving others.

Love does not boast as the verse states in 1 Corinthians 13:4. **Boasting is a sin that is rooted in pride.**

It is desiring to put ourselves and our accomplishments above others. It is looking out for ourselves and not putting the interest of others above ourselves.

. . . Our boasting may not seem obvious to others but we can not fool the Lord – He knows our hearts.

I don't like this sin when I see it in others but I am sure slow at dealing with it in my own life.

I am thankful to be reminded that grace is for failures and I am a failure. When I catch myself in this sin I need to repent and to rely on the Lord and ask Him to fill me with His love so I can love others as He does.

Love does not sing its own praises.

It doesn't boast about its own successes.

In Christ I have nothing to boast about because God has done it through me. If I am to boast it must be to boast in the Lord.

- <https://bit.ly/42ZQGTS>

As we have seen, there truly is – ***NO ROOM FOR BOASTING!***

If we do boast we can do that to encourage others by helping them in their walk with God.

Paul, in II Corinthians 8:24 wrote, **“Therefore show to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.”**

Paul is telling the Corinthians that when Titus and the brethren arrive, treat them well and give them an offering that will reflect your love for the brethren in Jerusalem, this gift from the Gentile churches.

This would be proof to the surrounding churches of their Christian love.

And Paul was boasting about the Corinthians' generosity, their love and he wanted them to show this as they helped the brethren in Jerusalem!

Please understand that Paul is not really boasting about them but what the Lord is doing in them. There is nothing wrong with encouraging people and sharing what God is doing in a person's life. But the key is always God because – ***THERE IS NO ROOM FOR BOASTING!***

But when there is boasting about all we have done, are doing and will do, we did to lose focus!

And that brings us to our next and last point – ***DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF THE FOCUS!***

VERSE 17

This is interesting, Paul distinguishes between baptism and the Gospel. Obviously, in his mind, they were separate issues.

This is important since there are Christian denominations today, like I have said, the Church of Christ, that teach the necessity of water baptism for salvation.

Yet if this were true, it's hard to imagine Paul being so cavalier and nonchalant about the subject.

Notice what Paul tells us in regard to what the Lord sent Paul to do, "**to preach the Gospel.**"

The key for Paul and for us is not to preach the Word of God based upon our wisdom or the wisdom of this world but by the power and wisdom that God gives to us by His Spirit!

In Romans 1:16-17 Paul speaks of the power of the Gospel to save, not baptism.

He wrote, "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'**"

May we not forget that!

Ray Stedman put it like this,

This introduces one of the greatest passages in the Bible, setting forth the difference between the wisdom of man and the wisdom of God.

Paul here introduces that which can cure divisions, both negatively and positively. He says, in effect, ***“You don’t cure divisions in a church by identification badges. Christ did not send me to take scalps or to cut notches on my gun handle as to how many converts I’ve won.”***

Now, he is not saying that it is wrong to baptize; he himself did it, and acknowledges that he did. He does not say we should stop baptizing because of this problem.

No, he says that is not why he was sent: ***“I was not sent to emphasize symbols, but, positively, I was sent to preach a whole gospel, not one emphasizing style, not in wisdom of words, but that which emphasizes content.”***

The facts in the gospel are what will set us free, and particularly, he says, the word of the cross.

The cross of Christ is what will heal the fragmentation of Christians wherever they are.

When you call them back to an understanding of the meaning of the cross, you will find all the divisions disappearing; they fade away like the morning mist.

When you get men’s eyes off all these status symbols, and call them back away from following men to the Person of Christ and his cross, all the divisions will disappear.

There has been no other cure that I know of through the years. The cross of Christ cuts across all human value systems. It wipes out all the petty distinctions that men make among themselves. The cross strips away our illusions and brings the pride of men tumbling down from that high place where it exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Paul is going to go on to describe this radical force that is so different than anything else there is nothing like it in the world.

No man would ever have planned the cross.

If it had been left up to us to plan the program by which God would change the world we would never have included a cross.

This is a radical principle that we need to understand, because, when you understand the cross, there will be no room left for the divisions of men.

That is why Paul calls us back to it.

- Ray Stedman, I Corinthians 1:17

Relationship problems are not solved by our carnal ways, they are solved by bringing them to the cross and leaving them there. That is where the healing is at.

If you doubt that, listen to what transpired as Moses and the children of Israel were set free from their bondage in Egypt and they are on their way to the Promise Land.

In Exodus 15:22-27 we are told, **“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I**

have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.’ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.”

Think about this for a minute because to me, it is truly incredible! They are just three days since the Red Sea miracle and now, this hardship causes them to murmur and complain!

But there was no water and when you have two to three million people in the desert and no water, that can be deadly!

So as they are traveling, they see this water, this large body of water. And can you imagine as they first saw this water, some probably ran and jumped right in and as they tasted it, well, the waters were bitter, undrinkable.

All that water and they could not drink it!

But, instead of bringing it to the Lord they complained to Moses.

What we do see is that Moses does bring this to the Lord and the Lord shows him a tree and tells Him to cast it into the water and those bitter waters would be made sweet, and they were!

How crazy is that. People try to come up with ways on how God did this, but He is God, and it is a miracle!

Now you may be thinking, ***“Okay pastor Joe, what does that have to do with us as Christians and all these divisions, these schisms in the church?”***

That is a great question, and this fits into what we are talking about today.

You see, when we find ourselves in bitter situations, around bitter people, having a bitter expression, when we allow these things to start causing divisions, schisms, the only solution to bring healing is when we place another tree in the midst of those waters.

What tree is that?

It is the cross of Jesus Christ.

You see, the wonderful thing is, when we do then that situation will become sweet in our lives and it is only the cross of Jesus Christ that will bring this healing!

I don't care what you are going through, bitterness is not of God, but sweetness is, and that sweetness will only come as you crucify the flesh and bring it all before the Lord!

What is interesting to me is that after this time of testing God brings them to Elim, where there were 12 wells of water and 70 Palm trees, a place of refreshing.

God knows what we are made of and when we need rest if we would only learn to trust in Him and walk by faith.

But here's the thing. If you refuse to let go of the bitterness, then you won't find those times of refreshing.

It is only when we give it to Jesus that He can take those bitter things in our lives and make them sweet, bringing to us times of refreshing!

And the same is true with these divisions and relationship problems. Let it go, give it to God, place it at the foot of the cross and enjoy the refreshing of the Lord.

Now we do have to be realistic here because you can do your best to heal relationships in Christ, but if the other person is not willing, there is nothing you can do. But don't go back to the way you were before you gave it to Jesus. Yes, they may not accept that, but you can enjoy the refreshing waters of God in your life if you do!

Now I know, some people feel that this is foolish, to give it to Jesus. They may say,
“Come on, be practical. We need more than just hearing about Jesus Christ crucified. We have problems in our marriage. We have problems with addictions. We have problems with our children. We have problems with guilt. We have problems with doubt.”

But I suggest that throughout the Epistle or letter, we’ll see that the solution to every problem that plagues every person is the same: *Jesus Christ and Him crucified!*

Remember, Paul is calling for – *UNITY!*

But the problem in our lives, in our church many times is that there are – *DIVISIONS AMONG THE BRETHREN!*

We need to let go of those things, thinking that we are so special, so important because there is – *NO ROOM FOR BOASTING!*

Then what should we do?

DON’T LOSE SIGHT OF THE FOCUS!

And of course, the focus in Christ and what He has called us to do!

And I will close with this, which we will get into next time, and that is what Paul tells us here in I Corinthians 1:17-18, “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

May we not forget that!