

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians

The Danger of Divisions

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1. An Authoritative Exhortation (v.10)

Paul had just reminded the church that Jesus is the foundation of their salvation and the giver of the gifts which they prize (vs.4-9). Keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus, he now strongly urges them forward in the name of Christ (cf. Rom. 15:30; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:12). Jesus Christ is both the authority behind his appeal and the focus of his encouragement to be unified (cf. Eph. 4:1-6; Col. 3:14-15).

2. A Fractured Situation (vs.10-16)

It had been revealed to Paul that the church had become a place of rampant factionalism which a significant hinderance to their experience of both unity and peace (1 Cor. 11:18; 12:25).

A. Factions: A schism may have different forms, but a distinguishing feature is that it separates what should be together (cf. John 10:19; Matt 9:16). The presence of these factions is an obvious manifestation of the reality that the Corinthian church as still acting carnally (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1ff).

B. Quarrels: Christians are to strive to be able to have disagreements about important matters without resulting in contention (cf. Rom 14:1ff). Rivalry and strife are fundamental characteristics of people who are not believers (Rom. 1:29; 13:13; Gal 5:20). The subtle corruption of discord in the fellowship can even significantly effect one's efforts to obey the commands of God (cf. Phil 1:15), and it had become ingrained in this church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3).

3. A Divine Commission (v.17)

Paul had a very straightforward understanding of his mission and of the ultimate solution to the problems that could be faced: he must preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16; cf. 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1-2). The preaching of the gospel, and believing that which has been preached, is the foundation upon which the Christian must first stand for salvation (Rom. 10:8-10) and must continue to stand firm (1 Cor. 15:1ff). It is the straight-forward reality of what God has done in Christ, not the clever way in which it is proclaimed, which God has chosen to magnify the glory of the cross (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31).