

Parson to Person

1 Corinthians 1 (Part 7)

(Division and Harmony—Patience with the Poema)

“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 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.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 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. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to

nothing the understanding of the prudent.’ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD’” (1 Corinthians 1:4–31 NKJV).

Christian Security and Behavioral Repentance

In the midst of infighting, abuse of grace, and carnality, the Corinthians were said to be a spiritually-gifted people—who were anticipating the coming of the Lord with excitement. Paul said that they were “*eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs. 7). Moreover, in the midst of their carnality Paul told

them that God will “*confirm [them] to the end, that [they] may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs. 8).

Apparently the Corinthians had enough theological/soteriological understanding to be secure and at peace in the salvation God had provided them, but were nonetheless in need of behavioral repentance. Therefore, Paul began this written discourse with them in order to address their needed multi-faceted and required change.

Division—Sectarianism

The first thing we note is the division manifested among the Corinthian believers. Paul required, “*that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (vs. 10).

The contentions Paul first addressed was sectarianism related to personal preferences in regard to leadership. It was not a theological issue that caused the division, but rather, apparent personality issues. One group said, “*I am of Paul,*” another said, “*I am of Apollos,*” another, “*I am of Cephas,*” and lastly, “*I am of Christ*” (vs. 12).

It is hard to imagine anyone wanting to identify with a grouping other than that of Christ Himself—but lo, it happens all the time. Christians divide over personalities, teaching style, musical tastes, even building and seating. However, a healthy believer will be able to choose a building, pastor/teacher, and even musical styles, etc. without dividing or being contentious. (Doctrinal divisions are another matter!) Christians must come to understand that we are all one body and will all be together in eternity. We will all worship together and enjoy the company of

even those with whom we find personality tension. (Yes, it is true that we don't all "gel" with one another—because God made us all a bit different.) However, we must come to love one another, appreciate one another, and support one another—even if different.

It is unknown what drove the Corinthians toward the segregations. However, whatever it was, Paul was insistent the believers in Corinth maintain unity.

Divide and Conquer?

It is of note that the enemy has worked to divide and conquer. If he can create and encourage infighting within the Church, he will succeed to get us off focus. Our focus must remain on the Lord and His glory, the body of Christ—and our call to serve one another, our neighbors, community, state, country and the whole of the world. Remember, Jesus told the apostles to disciple the nations. The onus is on us too! Paul wrote, *"We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (vss. 23–24). We too must give attention to the things for which Jesus has called us. We are in a real battle—a battle with spiritual wickedness, not one another!

United—In Christ Jesus!

Paul told the Corinthians, *"...of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the LORD'"* (vss. 30–31). Like the Corinthians, we are called to glory in the Lord, enjoy the *"righteousness and*

sanctification and redemption” He alone has provided, and “glory [only] in the Lord.”

I love you all,
Pastor Paul