

1st Cor 1:10-17

“A Plea For Unity”

with out a doubt it's great to see numerous churches in love with Jesus sprinkled throughout our cities and neighborhoods. Out there teaching God's Word and touching people's lives, making an impact for the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ. However there can come with that a negative draw back and that is this, it creates opportunity for a lack of accountability in the lives of believers. and What I mean by that is this; it creates a ready made atmosphere that lends itself to an escape for that person, that group of people, or that family when a particular difficulty or dilemma arises with in their local fellowship that they don't want to deal with. and So rather than work together to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, it's much easier to just get mad, leave the fellowship and go to another church. and That's not God's heart, God's will, or God's way for His people, God would have us to work together to resolve our differences, He's given us the necessary tools to do so by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and He expects us to utilize them. But confrontation isn't always comfortable, so people would just often times rather cut out.

1st Cor is a corrective letter, it deals with all kinds of dilemmas and difficulties in the body there in Corinth, but understand that the assumed position in this letter is that of a staying plugged in to the local assembly and working to resolve the problems. As we make our way through it we'll see some severe statements made, serious issues at hand, but the letter assumes you'll stay in the church. and Really such is the case in practically every epistle written, any time they're dealing with problems, the dilemma is addressed from the perspective that we're going to stay put, not take the 1st train out. Now in matters of unrepentant sin church discipline is enacted, but that comes from the side of the leadership dealing with it appropriately, which is something altogether different entirely than what we're speaking of presently. What we're speaking of is the fact that when I have a personal problem, be it my problem, or a problem I have with someone else, I'm to work towards resolve and reconciliation as opposed to simply running down the road to some place else. Even if the issue happens to be a sin issue, I'm to seek 1st to deal *with* it, work *through* it, seek repentance *from* it and all of that, if that doesn't happen then the next level of church discipline can take place, but I'm always to seek restoration and reconciliation 1st.

Now, we left off last time taking note of the fact that moving in the gifts of the Spirit, doesn't necessarily indicate that a person is *spiritual*. The church in Corinth was incredibly carnal, yet they were moving in literally all of the gifts of the Spirit. The bible teaches us that the Spirit gives gifts, distributing to each one individually as *He wills*. Which is to say that the reason God may *gift* me isn't found *in* me, it's found in Him and His sovereignty. I've done nothing to *deserve any* gift through which He may enable me spiritually to serve Him more effectively in whatever area He may've called me. The very word “Gifts” of the Spirit testifies to that reality, I can't earn them, they're *given as gifts*, literally *grace gifts* and what is grace but unmerited favor? So the gifts of the Spirit are given, not through merit, but by grace, and when it's all said and done there'll be no flesh that glories in His sight but as it is written, “*He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.*” 1 Cor 1:31 Well, Paul has spent time *commending* them, now he starts *correcting* them. and Just remember that that's always the best order, commendation before exhortation, look at Vs 10.

Vs 10

One of the many things that I've come to love about Paul over the years is his tender and tactful heart of compassion. He was an *apostle* of Jesus Christ, had been endowed with authority *from* Jesus Christ to both establish, and instruct believers in the body of Christ, he didn't have to "plead" with anybody to do anything. He had every right to *command* whatever it was that needed to take place with a "This is just the way it is," type resolve. But he didn't do that, your bible may read, "I exhort you" but word here has a sense of compassion behind it, it's "I beseech you, I beg you, I plead with you." Remember when he was writing to Philemon and he said, "...*though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you...*" Philem 8-9 and That's the type of heart we have represented here before us, and the type of heart we want to emulate in this ministry. There are times when situations arise that though we might be very bold in Christ to *command* you what is fitting, yet for love's sake we rather *appeal* to you. and That's just so right on, oh there are times when an appeal in love doesn't exactly cause us to respond and so the command has to come, but what an awesome example we have in the apostle Paul, on how to address and deal with confrontational issues. He could've made a power play right out of the shoot, but he chose to walk in humility, to plea and appeal to them for love's sake that they might be *unified* as believers.

and He draws their attention to the fact that they're family right off the bat by calling them "brethren." "We're a single family unit, bros and sisters in Christ, so let's get along." and Notice that he pleads with them by the *name* or *in* the name, or *through* the name of our Lord Jesus Christ What does it mean to do something, or ask for something, or command something in the *name* of our Lord Jesus Christ? Often times we tend to perceive, "the name of Jesus" as sort of a postage stamp which sends our prayers to Heaven, or the seal of authority that gets done what needs to get done. However those are misconceptions biblically. But because Jesus said, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:13-14 People have grafted this idea that as long as we say the words, "In Jesus name" at the end of our prayer that it's a done deal, as though those are the magic words that get God to listen *to* us, and respond *for* us. But I would challenge you to study through the prayers of the NT to find how many of them end in the words, "In Jesus name," you're going to be hard pressed to find it. and I'm not saying it's wrong to end your prayers with the words, "In Jesus name," that's the way I pray. But just because we say, "In Jesus name" that doesn't mean that we're in fact praying, "In Jesus name." Because to do something in someone's name, or to say something in someone's name mean that we do it in accordance with their nature, in a manner that's true to their heart. If I come to you in the name of the President of the U.S. that means I come to you in such a way as to represent him, his character, his heart in a matter. So to with my prayers, pleas or commands in Jesus' name, so that when Jesus says, "Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it." What He's saying is that whatever you ask that lines up perfectly with His nature, His character, His heart in the matter at hand He'll do it. But I can ask for something that's completely out of line with His heart all day long, and just because I tack the words, "In Jesus name" at the end of my prayer or petition, that doesn't mean it's going to happen. I can command something in Jesus' name all day long, but there's no authority *in* it, if it doesn't line up accurately with His heart *through* it.

So if I command you to be healed in Jesus name, but God's will is to teach you *through* the illness rather than spare you *from* the illness, you're not going to be healed. Because though I've used the words, "In Jesus name" I haven't lined up with the heart and nature of Jesus in this situation.

You see? Often times people will use the argument, "Jesus healed everyone He seen that needed healing?" That's not true, in John Ch 5 you find Jesus there by the pool of Bethesda, all kinds of sick, and people with infirmities lying around it, did He heal them all? No, just one, why not all of them? **Wasn't His will for their lives, there's just no getting around the fact that physical infirmities can visit our lives and it's not always in the heart of God to take them from us for reasons that often times escape us.**

But all that to say that when we use the name of Jesus what we're declaring is that we're doing what we're doing, or saying what we're saying in accordance with His heart. and If you're praying, or doing something that's in accordance with His heart, you're acting in His name whether you state that verbally or not, if you've prayed in His name He's heard you whether you use the words "In Jesus name," or not. Don't think that God won't hear you if you don't use those words, as I said try finding them on the end of a prayer found in the scriptures.

So Paul pleads with them by the name, or in accordance with the heart of Jesus. and In this instance what is it that's in accordance or in line with the heart of Jesus for His body? Unity, like mindedness, harmony amongst the fellowship of believers, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no *divisions* among you. Now he's not saying we need to be "Cookie cutter Christians" with out diversity. But he's calling for that one heart, that one mind, the mind of Christ to be a working reality in us all. That there be no *divisions* among us; that word "Division" is the Greek word "Schismata" from which we get our word, "Schism." **Literally it speaks of a tearing, or a ripping apart, so Paul is pleading with them to stop ripping each other apart, in essence tearing up the Body of Christ, but rather that they be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Those words "perfectly joined together" are a medical term for the resetting of a broken bone, or placing a dislocated joint back in place.** In other words division in the body of Christ isn't something that's natural, and it hinders the working order of the body, there needs to be mending whenever there's been a tearing, or a division.

Now as you study the scriptures one thing that it doesn't take too long to come to realize is that the Word of God places a tremendous amount of emphasis on unity. Be it in the gospels, the book of Acts, Romans, 1st and 2nd Cor, the book of Eph, Philippians, 1st Thess, the book of James, 1st Peter...all of which at some point or another address or touch on the need for unity in the body of Christ, not to mention the Psalms or any other of the books of the OT. **Why is there so much emphasis upon unity found in the pages of the scriptures? Because we're so prone to divide, and division no matter how you slice it is fleshly, it's carnal, it's sin, it's not what a life walking in the Spirit is about. and 90+ % of the time we're dividing over menial, absolutely non-essential things, be it vying for power, or position, or persuasion, personal opinion, difference of perspective or whatever, and there's no need for that, because the Agape' love of God is greater than any differences in opinion or perspective that we might possess.**

Now certainly there are biblical mandates and lines we have to draw, we don't unify at all cost say at the sacrifice, or compromise of the truth, or purity, or righteousness. The bible tells us that, "...*the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*" James 3:17 You see before a willingness to yield comes into play there's 1st of all purity, then that manner of spirit that is working between you peaceably, not a sense of proving my point or whatever the case may be, *then* there's a gentleness, willingness to yield and unify. But you can't just turn a blind eye to heresy, or a sinful situation and say, "Hey, this is what works for you, and this is what works for me, lets just all hold hands and get along."

If you don't believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for the sin of the world and rose again the 3rd day having conquered sin and death so that whoever would believe upon Him would never perish but have everlasting life, I can't yoke up in unity with you. Doesn't mean that I'm not concerned *about* you, or that I'm not here *for* you, but that I can't call you my brother, we're not of one mind, and one heart. If you think it's ok for you to be staying and sleeping with your boyfriend, or your girlfriend even though the scripture is clear on immorality and you claim to be a Christian personally, I can't go there, or be ok with that.

But to divide over non-essentials is just that, non-essential, and it's essentially a problem, it gives a foothold to the enemy to weaken the ranks/the strength and defenses with in the fellowship. Think about it, if God has ordained power in agreement, if one could chase 1,000 and 2 will put 10,000 to flight, what's going to happen when we're pulled apart, no longer together, divided as opposed to united? *We'll be systematically stripped of our spiritual strength as a body, oh, greater is He who is in you than He that is of the world, it's true. But the point remains God has ordained strength in a unified body of believers, the Corinthian believers were no longer really together, they were being pulled apart.*

Vs11

I can tell you already that I love Chloe and those of her household. Why? Because she's not afraid to bust people out when things are going down that are out of line, she calls them out. Our society teaches us to hold quiet, say nothing, cover it up, don't nark people out, but the bible teaches that in trying to cover sin we won't prosper. Oh it's true, "*Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.*" Prov 10:12 *But how critical that we keep the context, because love doesn't turn a blind eye to a potentially damaging and sinful situation, the bible is clear that love is truthful.* Faithful are the wounds of a friend, the bible says, "*Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it.*" Ps 141:5 Chloe and those of her household were like watchmen on the wall, sounding the alarm when they discovered a breach in the wall, or when it was apparent that trouble was on the way. and She was afraid to sign her name to the situation, that's another impeccable attribute. *How many times people want to make you aware of something so that you can deal with it, but they're not willing to put it in writing with their name attached to it. If someone isn't willing to be called out about their concern, I dismiss it. If you aren't willing to be named in the accusation of a situation, than don't even bring it up, other than that its nothing more that hearsay and gossip. Chloe was willing to be called out. So division is the issue, and in Vs 12 we're given a specific example.*

Vs12-13

Remember that word, “Divisions” in Vs 10 speaking of a ripping or being torn apart, it’s rather grotesque imagery, but Paul here is making a powerful point. He says, “Is Christ divided?” That is, has He been cut into pieces so as to be distributed amongst different groups? Has His body been split up? It’s a rhetorical question, phrased in such a way as to demand an emphatic, “No!” But yet some of you are saying, “I’m of Paul,” or “I’m of Apollos,” or “I’m of Cephas,” or “I’m of Christ.” **As if there’s more than one group, or different groups that identify with different parts of Christ, but Christ isn’t divided. Perhaps some were saying, “Paul planted this church we’re with him!” Other’s said, “He may’ve planted but he’s not very profound (remember they were into exciting speech in those parts), Apollos is an excellent orator, an eloquent articulator, a profound proclaimer, we’re with him!”** Still others said, “Peter was the 1st among the apostles, Jesus gave him the keys to the kingdom of heaven, we’re with him, we’re the ones who are really right with God!”

Then the super spiritual “Holier than thou,” group were all, “You guys are all missing it, we’re of Christ!” But make no mistake it didn’t matter which party leader they were magnifying, the reality is they weren’t really pointing to the greatness of the man, but how great *they* were for identifying with that man. The point that each group was trying to make is that they were more spiritual than any of the others because of who they identified with. **and It was dividing them, today it would be like saying, “I of the Christian church,” “Well, I’m of the Baptist church,” Well I’m of Calvary Chapel,”** as if being apart of a particular denomination or affiliation is what makes you more spiritual than any other Jesus loving, God fearing individual on the planet. Our righteousness, and “right on-ness” is of Christ, and that’s it, hang whatever name you want on the front of the building, if you’re in Christ than we’re the same in His eyes, **we’re apart of the body of Christ period.** (No denominational badges in Heaven), I can’t remember who it was that said, “The more spiritual a man becomes, the less denominational he becomes.” and That’s true (I’m not saying he doesn’t belong to a denomination, but that his identity doesn’t lie in the denomination, or affiliation, but in Christ).

Now, division is wrong, distinction is not. It’s not wrong to prefer one particular teacher, or to be blessed by a certain style by which God has gifted one person as opposed to another. But the messenger isn’t the focus, it’s the message that we’re receiving, it’s about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The problem comes in when I begin to exalt the messenger, or think that because I’m under a certain person, that makes me more spiritual than another. We’re all under Jesus Christ and we’re 1 body regardless of where we fellowship or who our Pastor may be.

That’s why he says, “Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” No. Jesus is to be our focus.

Vs14-17

Few things we want to point out here before we wind down. 1st of all I’d have you know that Paul is not in any way, shape, or form minimizing act of baptism. Baptism is extremely important, Jesus commanded it, therefore we need to do it.

Though this isn't his primary topic at this point, inadvertently he addresses it so we're going to draw it out. There is a doctrine (prominent in our neck of the woods/portion of the country) known as baptismal regeneration. Which basically teaches you that receiving Christ is great, but you're not saved until you're baptized, and so there are many churches that keep their baptismal full so that if someone receives Christ they can baptize them on the spot. Because if you receive Christ, but then get hit by a Mack truck on the way to the creek, you're going to hell (because you were never baptized). This is probably one of the strongest texts that refute that whole mentality and position, because be that the case how could Paul have the *audacity* to thank God that there were people that he *didn't* baptize? "Oh thank God that there are people going to hell because I didn't baptize them..." and He definitely couldn't say that Christ didn't *send him to baptize* if baptism was necessary for salvation. Because Christ's whole commission to Paul was predicated upon him turning the Gentiles from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, and if that's not complete until you're baptized then Paul is off his rocker and rebelling against the very thing Christ called him to do. Is baptism important? Absolutely, is it essential to salvation or regeneration? Absolutely not, if it is then when Jesus said, "It is finished," that being the work necessary for the redemption of man, He was lying. But God forbid that I should boast in anything except the cross of Jesus Christ God will not share, or entrust any aspect that makes for our salvation to man. You see, either faith in Christ is sufficient for salvation or it's not, and if it's not you're saying that God needs me to do something before I can be saved.

Which couldn't be any more unbiblical and it's hard for me to see a position like that as anything but blasphemy towards the cross when you follow it out to its natural conclusion.

Baptism is simply an outward declaration of the inward transformation of my heart; it's me identifying with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and It's an act of obedience, just as important as any act of obedience is that Jesus desires or requires of us. But you're not going to go to hell if you don't get to the creek before you're baptized. God is searching your heart, what's the bible say? That man looks to the outward appearance but God looks to the heart.

Paul says that God didn't send him to baptize, but to preach the gospel. You see the priority isn't upon baptism, but upon believing and receiving the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, *therein* lies the power of salvation. I can baptize you again and again and you still may not be saved, because its not about the removal of the filth from the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, which comes from the cleansing flow of the blood of Jesus Christ received by faith in Him. **He was crucified for our transgression and raised for our justification. It's by grace that you've been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. The power of God unto salvation isn't found in baptism, but in the gospel. Paul says, "That's what it's all about," and he says that he didn't try to dazzle them with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.**

Brilliantly persuasive words may win a person's mind, but they can't change a person's heart. and A cleverly crafted argument can actually rob the message of the gospel of its power, because it steals (subtly though it may be) the focus. I'm wowed by the words of the messenger, but not captivated, motivated and moved unto repentance by the message.

It's not wrong to think your thoughts through and present things in the best way you know how, and if God has gifted you in eloquence, and skillful articulation, praise the Lord. But make sure you utilize those gifts in such a way as to magnify and glorify Jesus, not wow people with your words, because then you miss the point of the message altogether. Jesus is our everything, He's our all in all, we're to be found *in* Him, centered *around* Him, we're His body singularly bound together collectively in unity. Christ isn't divided, and even so we're to be united, 1 mind, and 1 mouth giving glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Prayer Points:

God it's so easy for us to get bent out of shape, making major issues out of the most minor and petty of problems. Forgive us, and help us to see the damage that it does to Your body when we divide, we're not the one's who bleed when Your body is torn and so we're often insensitive to the reality of what we're doing. Quicken us; work a heart of repentance into us that we might work towards resolve and reconciliation that You might be glorified and magnified in our lives. We realize that division doesn't bring You glory, Jesus we thank You for Your sufficiency to save us and that our salvation is in no way dependant upon us but that , Jesus we thank You for Your sufficiency to save us and that our salvation is in no way dependant upon us but that You finished the work. and May Your work be the focus, not our words; we love You and we give You praise.

If you've never given your heart to Christ the message of the gospel is clear, Jesus shed His blood for the remission of your sins. 3 days later He rose bodily from the dead, and if you're willing to trust Him for that you'll be forgiven of all your sin, washed clean in the sight of God. Don't ask me how it works, it works because God says it does and He's the One we have to believe. So trust in Jesus Christ and you'll be born again, given new life.