

## I Corinthians 4 - Divisions – part 2

### I Cor. 1:10-17

We started last time looking at this issue of division in the church at Corinth.

--We saw that the cause of their division and most of their other problems was that they simply didn't love each other.

--Paul takes on the problem of division because it was a deal breaker for their church as it is for any church.

--We are to carry the message of God's love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and power to unite a world that doesn't have anything of those things.

--When we don't love each other, that message is canceled out.

--The gospel is a love story "for God so loved..." and only love can tell it!

--Jesus' own words: **John 17:21-23**

--It all hangs on our oneness.

This is very practical topic because we all know what quarrels and divisions have done and can do—destroying homes, churches and communities.

--How many of us have been hurt badly by splits and quarrels within the church? Some do not go to church because of this very thing.

Divisions have been happening since the beginning.

--Division was the first problem that Paul took on because it betrays the underlying problem of their lack of love which undermined the entire purpose of their church.

### 1. Who they were and how they behaved were not in alignment.

--The first 9 verses state who they were; this is a positional truth, that is, their status with God—saints; in fellowship with Jesus; *In Christ*.

--When God saves us we are placed into a permanent position as the Children of God and have, from then on, eternal life both in quality and quantity.

--***Nothing can change this.***

--We did not save ourselves so we cannot un-save ourselves.

--We did not birth ourselves so we cannot un-birth ourselves.

--We did not resurrect ourselves so we cannot un-resurrect. **Eph. 2:5-6**

--We did not seat ourselves in the heavenlies so we cannot unseat ourselves.

--We did not seal ourselves with the Holy Spirit so we cannot unseal ourselves.

Saved is who we are positionally, but it may not appear that way experientially

--The saved are capable of acting like they are unsaved.

--**I Corinthians 3:3-4** – Carnal is a word used otherwise to describe the lost; the saved were acting like lost people.

--This was demonstrated, among other ways, in their lack of unity.

Jesus prayed for our unity and oneness in John 17 because that is the way the world would know that we are His.

--That oneness is fabulously attractive: **Acts 2:46-47**

--Evangelistic power is not in our outreach, not in our polished words, not in our organization—it is in our unity and oneness.

--Harmony or oneness was their first need in Corinth and it is our first need.

### 1. Have you noticed how many churches we have here? I count 34.

--There are a number of reasons for all our denominations and some of those reasons are not bad.

--Some of the denominations popped up just simply out of cultural and regional necessity.

--Lutherans were started in Germany by Martin Luther; Methodist were started in England by the Wesley brothers; Baptists didn't exist until the first church was established in Providence Rhode Island.

--These were regional and culture churches that, at least at their inception, had few differences in theology—they had separate churches mostly because they were in separate regions.

### **The only legitimate reason to leave a church or denomination:**

1. Gross theological divergence. ie. – “Jesus isn't God”; “We are saved by what we do not by Jesus alone”; “The Bible is not reliable” **Rom. 16:17**

2. Unrepentant sinful behavior and or policies – “Homosexuality is not a sin”; **II Thess. 3:14**; **I Cor. 5:11** “**deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh**,”; **I Tim. 1:20**.

--The Majority of splits do not happen for these reasons: they happen because we are carnal--children in our thinking and acting; selfish.

### **2. Notice: the nasty vowel is present in the Corinthian church.**

**I Cor. 1:12** -- “**I**”

--We have room for all kinds of diverse things and people but we do not have room for “I”.

--**V. 10** – We only have room for agreement (the Greek literal says “**speak the same thing**”; room for the same mind and same judgment.

--Room for the collective of love not the selfishness of “I”

--Notice Paul says a similar thing to the church at Philippi: **Phil. 2:1-3**

--Also to the Ephesus church: **Eph. 4:1-3**.

--Corinthians: “Speak the same thing, think the same way, make the same judgments.”

--How is this possible? Wouldn't it be great if you all thought like me?—I don't even think like myself sometimes!

--It is not that we all have the same thoughts—God has made us diverse for a very good reason so that we can be a well-rounded team.

--Not the exact same thoughts but the same mind!

**Phil. 2:5** – Paul tells us that Christ gave up all his rights and personal privileges and took a low place to lift us up.

--The command is that we be just like Jesus in our thinking—this solves the division problem instantly.

--When we all have that mind about us—things go great here.

--When we decide to put the things of Christ first and are willing to suffer loss for the sake of lifting someone else up, the sky's the limit!

--We do that because that's the way love acts.

### **3. Corinthian test questions**

Let's take the test that Paul gives the church at Corinth:

1. Is Christ divided? – We shouldn't want any part of what would make Him seem divided to our world.

--Our behavior reflects directly on Him – our behavior's most direct relationship is not on any leader or any church but on Christ.

--When we speak disparagingly about any believer or any church – It reflects directly on Jesus.

2. Was Paul crucified for you? – It's a challenge to drop all our beloved