

Jesus, The Dividing Line

1 Corinthians Chapter 1

Paul comes to Corinth on his second missionary journey.

- Comes to Greece after being directed by the Holy Spirit (forbidden in movement)
- Received a vision in a dream to come to Macedonia
- Came to Philippi - Arrested and supernaturally released.
- Came to Thessalonica - 3 Sabbaths and run out of town
- Came to Berea - Those more noble because they studied the Scriptures
- Came to Athens - Sees and great numbers of idols and preached a message to the philosophers, virtually ignored and saw very little fruit.
- Leaves Athens, 50m people and came to Corinth, 80m Roman Citizens + slaves

Acts 18:9 the Lord encourages Paul to not be afraid and to speak.

Corinth was a seaport town on an isthmus that narrowed to 4 miles. In this place Nero tried to have a canal built but gave up, although, ships were dragged across the isthmus over logs. It was safer and shorter than sailing around. Corinth was typical in the panthea of deities but the main deities were:

- Aphrodite *gk* (Venus *rm*) – Temple prostitution was an acceptable form of religious practice.
- Poseidon *gk* (Neptune *rm*) – Being a seaport, sailors paid homage to god of the sea.

Corinth was one of the most carnal cities in the Roman Empire. To be “*corinthianized*” meant to be completely given over to carnality.

Acts 18:11 - Paul in Corinth (1 ½ years) (map: Paul's 2nd journey)



Ministry in Corinth, began in the synagogue. Paul then met Priscilla and Aquila and stayed with them. They were tent makers. Timothy and Silas arrived and at that time Paul was able to “*completely devoting*” himself to the word and testifying to the Jews the gospel of Jesus Christ. When they resisted and blasphemed, Paul left the synagogue and went next door to Justus’ house and taught the Gentiles. In **Acts 18** reports that Crispus the leader of the synagogue was saved.

An interesting notation on this letter, this letter is the 1st letter to the Corinthian Church that had been preserved. **1 Corinthians 5:9** Paul refers to a previous letter that had been written. It has not been preserved for inclusion in the scriptures.

Later in his 3rd Missionary Journey while in Ephesus, Paul writes 1 Corinthians responding to:

- Reports from Chloe's household concerning disturbances - **1 Corinthians 1:11**
- From a delegation from Corinth with questions - **1 Corinthians 16:7**
- And questions from the Corinthian Congregation - **1 Corinthians 7:1**

1 Corinthians Outlined

Chapters 1-4 Divisions in the Church
Chapters 5-6 Disorder in the Church
Chapters 7-16 Difficulties in the Church

Calling - An order or request to undertake a particular activity or work;

1Cr 1:1

1) Called by One vs 1-9

God's
Calling Has
a Private
Aspect

Paul, **called** as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

- Paul - Called an apostle (messenger). Paul never equates himself with the twelve but he knows his calling. He is a messenger of Jesus Christ.
- Paul is also called by the will of God. He did not become an apostle because of popular opinion or by personal desire, but by God's plan. His apostleship is not sustained or deluded by popular demand or by personal desire, but by God alone.
- Sosthenes - was Paul's travelling companion. In **Acts 18:17** a person with the same name may very well be the same person. This would make sense that he would be mentioned here because the Corinthians know him.
 - **Acts 18:8** The leader of the synagogue, Crispus became a believer. He was fired.
 - **Acts 18:17** A new leader was hired, Sosthenes. When Sosthenes and the Jews brought Paul before the proconsul, Gallio, their arguments were dismissed and Sosthenes was beaten for bringing a trivial matter before him.
 - Somewhere Sosthenes became a believer and a companion of Paul, "OUR BROTHER".

1Cr 1:2

To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints **by calling**, with all who in every place **call** on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

God's
Calling Has
a Mutual
Aspect

- To the "Church" - Ekklesiai - the meaning of this word is simply "assembly". Church was just a secular gathering of people for a particular purpose. In these communities there was an "ekklesiai" that gathered to determine city-wide ordinances and decisions (a town council). Paul calls the saint's assembly the **Ekklesiai of God**.
- "Saints by Calling" (KJV - says "called *to be* saints" the *to be*, is inserted by the translators. The more accurate meaning is that they are already called saints.)
 - Called Saints even though these to whom Paul writes have many problems. Divided, Suing each other, Incest, Defiling the Lords Supper, Balance Problems with Spiritual Gifts.
 - Called Saints not by their performance but by calling on the name of the Lord.
 - "Have Been Sanctified" - they are in Christ SANCTIFIED even though they are not behaving perfectly.
- Not only written to the church at Corinth but to all in every place who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That means that this letter is for you and me in this place today.

1Cr 1:3

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Lord - Title Jesus - Name Christ - Mission

1Cr 1:4

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

- Paul thanks God always for the problematic Christians in his life. How? He initially focuses on the thing God is doing in their life.
- What is God doing in this problematic church.?

1Cr 1:5

that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

- Enriched in speech
- Enriched in knowledge

- 1Cr 1:6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you,
- Christ's testimony is confirmed in them
- 1Cr 1:7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- Not Lacking any gift
 - Very interesting that a church can have all the gifts yet be as carnal as the Corinthians were.
 - Eagerly awaiting Jesus Return!
- 1Cr 1:8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Have a promise of confirmed blamelessness in the Day of the Lord.
- 1Cr 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were **called** into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
- God Is Faithful - not man
 - Called into Fellowship
 - Distant Fulfillment / when we are all risen with Him to heavenly places
 - Near Fulfillment / we right now are in fellowship with Him.
- God's Calling Has a Purposeful Aspect**
- A Few Things we are Called to:**

2 Timothy 1:9 *"Who hath saved us, and called [us] with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"*

John 15:15 *"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you **friends**; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."*

1 Corinthians 7:22 *"For he that is called in the Lord, [being] a servant, is **the Lord's freeman**: likewise also he that is called, [being] free, is Christ's servant."*

Galatians 5:13 *"For, brethren, ye have been called unto **liberty**; only [use] not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."*

1 Thessalonians 4:7 *"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto **holiness**."*

1 Peter 2:9 *"But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness **into his marvellous light**:"*

1 Peter 2:21 *"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you **to follow in His steps**,"*

2 Peter 1:3 *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto **life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him that hath **called us to glory and virtue**:"*

Responsibilities of the Called:

Consecrated - Set Apart Jesus said *"Not my will but thine be done"*

2 TIMOTHY 2:20-21 *"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver; but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*

Faithfulness - Strict or thorough in the performance of duty

1 TIMOTHY 1:12 *"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."*

Credibility - capable of being believed

PROVERBS 22:1 *"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold."*

Accountable - the quality of being answerable. The servants of the Lord are accountable to the Lord and to the church.

ROMANS 14:12 *"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God"*

LUKE 12:48 "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

1 CORINTHIANS 3:13-15 "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

1Cr 1:10 2) Division Problems in The Church vs 10-17

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus
Phil 2:2-5

- Paul has a number of things to correct in this church. The first thing he needs to address is the dis-unity. This church had problems, Every church has problems.
- "By the name of our LORD" - This is the 6th time Paul brings up the LORDSHIP of Jesus
- No Divisions (*gk* = schisma, does not mean differing groups but it means to tear or rip to rend)
- He wants them as a church to:
 - Agree (KJV= say the same thing) not just say the same words but the same intent
 - Be Made Complete (KJV= perfectly Joined Together)
Have the Same Mind (Philippians 2:2-5)
Have the Same Judgment
- 1 Corinthians 12:18-25 "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another."

1Cr 1:11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.

- Paul had received a report from a woman in the church.
- Can you imagine, as this is being read to the church what people are thinking; thinking about Chloe?
 - Here is Paul's answer to the gossip or backbiting - Name Names.
 - In Deuteronomy 17:6-7 the one who brings the accusation throws the first stone. They cannot just throw accusations. They must follow through. This separates the gossip from those who can prove the truth.
 - Chloe may not be just a gossip, but honorable, caring about the church.
- The report detailed a problem that there is not just a division but a division that has caused quarrel.

1Cr 1:12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

- The people have classified themselves into groups defined by their favorite teacher. They have drawn lines between them.
 - Paul - the man who founded the church
 - Apollos - The man who was eloquent and was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24-28)
 - Cephas (Peter) - The man who was first among the Apostles

Christ - We follow Jesus Only all else is carnal. (possibly the worst, most snobbish)

- Distinctions verses Divisions
Divisions are defined as a tearing apart.
Distinctions are distinguishing factor, attribute or characteristic
The church has far too long divided the kingdom of Christ over distinguishing characteristics.
- **It is time to grow up.** Different denominations exist because different emphasis's (i.e.: social causes, teaching, fellowship, music) different music styles (i.e.: hymns, choruses), different governing styles (i.e.: Pastor Lead, Elder Lead, Congregational), different callings and gifting.
- The problem in Corinth wasn't that different people had a preference as to who they liked to listen to It was that they became arrogant and elitism came in. Thus each division believed they had the handle on truth and the other did not.

PSALM 199:63 "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts."

1Cr 1:13 **Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?**

- Paul demonstrates how ridiculous it is to have divisions in the Kingdom of Christ.
- "Is Christ divided" - Jesus never grouped some people in a class better than any other. The closest he came to that was the Sadducees and Pharisees. But His criticism of them was that they were the ones who were divisive. He judged them as they judged others.
- "Paul was not crucified for you" - Paul wasn't the perfect sacrifice.
- "Baptized in the NAME of Paul" - Why? What good would that do?
- One argument of division in Corinth was that Paul baptized some.

1Cr 1:14 **I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,**

- Earlier in verse one we see that Sosthenes a companion with Paul. This verse shows that Crispus the guy before Sosthenes was baptized by Paul.

1Cr 1:15 **so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.**

1Cr 1:16 **Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.**

- I love the humanity of Paul. He starts with a strong illustration. "I baptize none of you" then there is an exception. But in this verse his strong illustration falls apart a little more. (Oh Yeah, and there was Stephanas)
- The point Paul is making is that he didn't baptize very many. It was not what he was sent to do. Therefore it is foolish that some would make themselves more special because Paul had baptized them.

1Cr 1:17 **For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.**

- Paul was very concerned about the salvation of men. Yet he declares he was not sent to baptize. This is a strong argument against baptismal regeneration.
- The church should not go to the other extreme and say there is no need for baptism because Paul did baptize some.
Baptism is not essential for salvation but it is important.
It is an act of testimony to others of the reality of our personal identification with Christ.
- Paul Knew His Job - TO PREACH THE GOSPEL!
 - Not in cleverness of speech (in simplicity) Very possible Paul learned to simplify after dealing with intellectualism in Athens and the wickedness in Corinth.
 - To not make cross of Christ void. It is possible to be too clever in preaching. If the preaching is too clever that people will focus and admire the preacher and completely miss Christ.
 - A warning for all who minister.

How to Defeat Divisions :

1. Make Jesus LORD
2. Esteem Others Better than Yourself
3. Appreciate Distinctions but have no Division
4. Know Your Calling

1Cr 1:18 **3) Moving the Dividing Line** vs 18-31

1st Division
Paul Moves
the Dividing
Lines

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- The word of the cross is foolishness -
 - The cross was a form of punishment that predated the Romans and the time of Jesus. It was used by Persians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Macedonians, and Romans. From the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD. Constantine made it illegal in the year 327 AD.
 - It was a punishment of criminals that was slow torturous painful death. The method actually accomplished two things. First it punished the criminal. Second the shamefully disgusting display that lasted sometimes for days dissuaded others from engaging in the same activity.
 - This was the punishment of rebels and criminals. For someone to say their savior was hung on a cross was foolishness. Why would anyone put their hope in a criminal who deserved this death.
- The word of the cross is the POWER OF GOD-
 - To those being saved have a perspective that is lost to those who are perishing. The Cross was my punishment. My savior took my penalty. He died that shameful death so I wouldn't.
- HERE IS THE DIVIDING LINE
 - Paul is opening the eyes of the Church. He is moving the dividing line back to the proper place. THE CROSS.
 - The Cross Divides - Those that are Saved Those that are Perishing.

1Cr 1:19

Man's
cleverness
will result in
nothing

For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."

- Isaiah 29:14 The Lord will "DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE" Not bow down to it.
- But for now it is the perception of the perishing that we Christians are standing on our heads. How foolish it is to stand on our heads. But when the Lord turns everything right side up we Christians will not be fools no longer. We will be declaring the next verse:

1Cr 1:20

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

1Cr 1:21

It pleases
God

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

- If the wisdom of the world is foolishness, and it doesn't cause anyone to come to God, why would God use worldly wisdom to save those who are lost? He doesn't.
- Paul knows the message is not foolish. He is speaking from the perspective of those who are lost.
- It pleases God that man is not saved through man's wisdom, or cleverness.
(speaking to preachers too - but we'll get to that in Chapter 2)

1Cr 1:22

For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;

1Cr 1:23

but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

2nd Division
Paul Divides
the Perishing
into 2 groups

- Concerning Salvation the Jew asks for a sign (RELIGION)
 - The Jews had God given religion. **But they turned it into rituals and tradition.** They left the Scripture and held to the "Oral Law"
 - Jesus Gave them a sign The Resurrection
 - **Matthew 12:38-40** "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
- Concerning Salvation the Greeks seek wisdom (PHILOSOPHY philo = love of sophy = wisdom)

- The rest of the world was Gentiles or Greek.
- These sought for human wisdom - Seeking for Truth.
- For centuries the Greek philosophers developed thought concerning discovered truth that shape principles of being, knowledge and conduct. (Pericles, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle) But they became **rationalists** - *the principle or habit of accepting reason as the supreme authority in matters of opinion, belief, or conduct.*
- J Vernon McGee brings up an illustration of the achievements of man and man achieving reason that is supreme. He says "Man is overimpressed by his own achievements. Man puts men in a rocket and sends him to the moon. He then calls those men "astronauts" " the moon is 250,000 miles away The sun 95 million miles away Alpha Centauri is 26 trillion miles (4.2 light years away) Man may have the smallest understanding of truth and we will declare we know the meaning of life.
- Example of Greeks seeking truth is Pilate. Jesus tells him what truth is.
- **John 18:37-38** " Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him."

But to these two the Cross is preached.

- To the **RELIGIOUS** a stumbling block
 - They want a savior who was the victor who points the way. A criminal on the cross doesn't accomplish their prerequisite for a savior.
- To the **RATIONALISTS** it is foolishness
 - The criminal on the cross becoming a savior is just sentiment and is ridiculous.



Earliest depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus in Rome has the caption "Alexamenos Worships His God"

1Cr 1:24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

3rd Division
A Unified
Third Group

- Paul describes a third group of people that come from the first two.
- The Called - the message of the cross has become the POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

1Cr 1:25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

- Jesus on the cross was the most foolish and the weakest moment of God.
- Yet it is wiser and stronger than anything man could ever do.
- Salvation is not achieved in human wisdom but in embracing the wisdom of God at Calvary

1Cr 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

1Cr 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

1Cr 1:28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

1Cr 1:29 so that no man may boast before God.

- Paul is returning to the original point needing to be corrected. Division in the Church.
- According to the World - We are not very wise
- According to the Cross - We are not very wise
- We Needed the Cross - We do not have room to boast in our wisdom.

1Cr 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

1Cr 1:31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

- The Church should not boast in what man or what denomination they identify with. This only causes division.
- The Church should boast in the Lord.
- "In Christ Jesus" - we are who we are Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption
- Who do you boast in? Do you boast in the Lord? What does that look like?

Let every pulpit rightly say, "**we preach Christ crucified!**" A strong church once inscribed these words on an archway leading to the churchyard. Over time, two things happened: the church lost its passion for Jesus and His gospel, and ivy began to grow on the archway. The growth of the ivy, covering the message, showed the spiritual decline. Originally it said strongly, **we preach Christ crucified**. But as the ivy grew, one could only read **we preach Christ**, and the church also started preaching "Jesus the Great Man" and "Jesus the Moral Example" instead of Christ crucified. The ivy kept growing, and one could soon only read, **we preach**. The church also had even lost Jesus in the message, preaching religious platitudes and social graces. Finally, one could only read **we**, and the church also just became another social gathering place, all about *we* and not about God.

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