"UNITE! DON'T DIVIDE!"

("Division is good in math, but bad in a church")
I Corinthians 1:10-17
1-15-2023

INTRODUCTION:

***A church needs to unite with each other, not fight with each other.**

I. The EXHORTATION for Church Unity (v. 10a)
(Paul's appeal offers the basis for church unity)

A. We should be united because of our oneness as *"brethren"*

B. We should be united because of our oneness in *"our Lord Jesus Christ"*

II. The ESSENTIALS for Church Unity (v. 10b)

A. A Singular Message
(The Gospel we proclaim gives us unity)

B. A Team Spirit
(The Cohesion we protect gives us unity)

C. A Common Conviction
(The Dogmas we believe give us unity)

III. The ENEMIES of Church Unity (v. 11-17)

A. Contention involving competitive strife (v. 11)

B. Cliques around human personalities (v. 12-17)

CONCLUSION:

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Ecc. 4:12 - A 3 fold cord is not quickly broken.

Ill. Aesop's fable - A father gave one stick to each of his 7 sons. they could break that stick easily. Then he tied 7 sticks together & they could not break it no matter how hard they tried.

What is always at the heart of disunity? Selfish pride.

Perhaps Paul deals first with this problem because if this one is resolved, all the rest are a piece of cake!

***A church needs to unite with each other, not fight with each other.**

I. The <u>EXHORTATION</u> for Church Unity (v. 10a)
(Paul's <u>appeal</u> offers the basis for church unity)

A. We should be united because of our oneness as *"<u>brethren</u>"*

"Beseech" - A rousing encouragement (Note: the spirit of this message should correspond to the tone, attitude, and appeal of Paul).

"Brethren" - We are family via our adoption into the family of God.

--We have received the same <u>re-birth</u>.

--We have the same <u>Father</u>.

--We have received the same <u>Spirit</u>.

--We share the same name - <u>Christian</u>.

--We have the same <u>inheritance</u> (*"heirs together of the grace of life"*)

"Brethren" - It is impossible for God's people to have total spiritual unity with those who are not in the family of God. But for ***"brethren"*** not to get along is really a shame and disgrace to our heavenly Father.

SEE: Psalm 133:1-3

Satan will often sow *"tares"* among the wheat to create disunity. *"Wolves in sheep's clothing."*

B. We should be united because of our oneness in *"our Lord Jesus Christ"*

Paul's appeal to us to be united is based on ***"the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** Paul does appeal for unity based on His name--not the name of a denomination or of any man or movement--but our unity should be around our common Lord and Savior.

We should be a united force with Jesus Christ along being the cohesive center and focus.

Do you name the name of Christ? Then join hands with us. United we stand, divided we fall.

When the world looks at us, do they see a people who honor the ***"name"*** of Christ by our unity with each other? It was our Lord's last request of the Father that we be one - John 17:17-23.

"Our Lord" - We have the same Lord. . . faith. . . spirit baptism (Eph. 4:3-6 - *"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all,a nd through all, and in you all."*).

I Corinthians uses several word pictures to depict the unity of the church:

1. Building (I Cor. 3:9)

2. Temple (I Cor. 3:16)

3. Body (I Cor. 12)

II. The ESSENTIALS for Church Unity (v. 10b)

A. A Singular Message

(The Gospel we proclaim gives us unity)

"Ye all" - None excluded. All it takes is one disgruntled, self-serving, egotistical, divisive, sectarian-spirited individual to create disunity. (All it takes is one Korah [Num. 16], one Absolum, one Judas, one Diotrephes [III Jn. 9])

"Speak the same thing" - Have a single message. Share a common rallying point. This common message should surround allegiance to Jesus Christ (not to man - cp. v. 12, cp. v. 23, 2:2).

On some fine points of interpretation, believers will have differences of opinion, yet in the cardinal doctrines there must be unity.

"In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity" (Augustine)

B. A Team Spirit

(The Cohesion we protect gives us unity)

"Divisions" - "to tear or rip apart"; to separate by dissension.

"Divisions" - *schismata* = schisms, splits, parties, different camps and loyalties.

"Among you" - among the Corinthian church. Among the world, expect divisions (*..."a sword"* - Mt. 10:34). It should not be so in the church.

Satan's method of destroying a church of family is "divide and conquer."

He seeks to use any method necessary (hurt feelings, bitterness, misunderstandings, inconsiderations, etc.) to separate and isolate a person from the protection of the group, so as to attack that segregated victim who is alone without the support of the group.

In Romans 16:17-18, God admonishes us to watch out for those who are the cause of divisions and to keep away from such divisive people (SEE: Rom. 16:17-18).

When we are all in the same work, serving the same Lord, pursuing the same goals, we will have unity. "A team that sweats together, gets together."

C. A Common Conviction
(The Dogmas we believe give us unity)

"Perfectly joined" - passive participle.

Who does the joining? The Holy Spirit of God.

The "perfect tense" suggests a unity that occurred in the past that is to have permanent results.

"Perfectly joined together" - To be put back in order; to be restored to a proper former condition.
The word was used by Herodotus (V, 28) for composing civil order (Rienecker, p. 386).

The term is "a medical term that describes the unity of the human body knit together." (Wiersbe, p. 569).

"Same mind" - Thoughts (about principles that really matter) What Paul is encouraging is that all believers have *"the mind of Christ"* (Morgan) (cp. 2:16), i.e. to be concerned about those matters that Jesus Christ is concerned about.

To have the same mind is to be compelled by the same aims and objectives. (Ill. On my first date with Terri I discovered that we share similar goals and ambitions)

"Same judgment" - conclusions (applications of principles; convictions) Believers should all share the same cardinal convictions, the same essential doctrines and moral dogmas.

A "conviction" is a belief you would be willing to die for.

What are fundamental doctrines? Clearly-taught Bible dogmas, apart from which one cannot be saved:

1) Inspiration and authority of Scripture

2) Virgin birth of Christ

3) Deity of Christ

4) Substitutionary death of Christ

5) Bodily resurrection of Christ

6) Salvation by grace through faith alone

A church cannot offer a doctrinal smorgasbord (on clearly-taught Bible theological truths or moral absolutes) from which members can pick and choose what they like best (MacArthur, p. 26).

There must always be a basis for unity. In Christianity, it is adherence to fundamental convictions: It is doctrine and duty; beliefs and practices; Biblical truth and moral purity; love of God's truth and God's people.

God is not calling for all of us to be spiritual clones (where we all look alike, dress alike, smell alike, do the same functions, etc.).

Unity is not uniformity:

--Unity comes by God changing a man internally, in the heart.
--Uniformity comes by man forcing others to externally conform to a legalistic standard.

Unity does not mean uniformity. Rather, it means oneness of purpose and a cooperative spirit (EX: team sports).

A Printing Press or Copier - Many different types of parts, but all working in harmony to produce a quality printed sheet.

III. The ENEMIES of Church Unity (v. 11-17)

A. Contention involving competitive strife (v. 11)

"It hath been declared unto me" - This was not gossip with the intention to destroy; it was truthful information with he intention to aid and correct the problem. (always examine your motive, your method of what you say about other believers) (note: Chloe family went to the authority)

"Contentions" - (plural) selfishly motivated strifes or quarrels (a spirit of competition)

Such contentions resulted in:

--lawsuits (6:6-7)
--divorces (7:10-14)
--jealousy over each other's gifts (12-14)
--disorder in the church (14)
--doctrinal confusion over the resurrection (15)
We are not to be competitors with each other, but cooperators with each

other (James 3:14-16 - *"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."*)

I heard about a quarrelsome church which had a sign outside that read: "Jesus First." One day storm winds blew off the "Jes" - leaving a more accurate description of that church: "Us First"!

B. Cliques around human personalities (v. 12-17)

V. 12

Some were exclusively loyal:

--to Paul (no doubt because he planted their church and was a theological genius)

--Others to Apollos (because he had great oratory skill, a stunning pulpiteer; a master of the Greek language, a homoletical genius - Acts 18:24)

--Others to Cephas (Peter) (because he was an apostle of notoriety, who was of the inner circle [Peter, James, John] who walked with Jesus; he was a big-name apostle)

Others had it right - they were loyal to Christ. If they had any problem, it might be a holier-than-thou spirit, which looked down their noses at those who were mixed up with other allegiances. Perhaps the *"Christ only"* groups felt they had no need for human instructors (Note, however: I Cor. 1:1, 12:28; Eph. 4:11; II Tim. 1:1, etc.) (MacArthur, p. 31).

Whenever a people divide over a person and form a party split, they have become cultic!

One distinguishing mark of a cult is that a cult will surround itself around a

human personality and be loyal to that person no matter what.

Who do cults pledge allegiance to?

--To the Jonestown cult - Jim Jones

--To the Jehovah's Witnesses cult - Joseph B. Rutherford and the Elite officers of the Watchtower Society

--To the Mormon cult - Joseph Smith and his successor Brigham Young

--To the Unification cult - Sung Yung Moon

--To the 7th Day Adventist cult - Ellen G. White

--To the Waco, Texas cult - David Koresh

--To the Christian Science cult - Mary Baker Eddy

--To the Muslim cult - Muhammad

--To the Roman Catholic cult - the Pope of the Vatican

There exists the danger of "personality cults" within Christianity today. Preachers with a certain charisma or dogmatic personality on large TV ministries or radio networks are (if they are not humble) in positions of danger - the danger of drawing *"away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:30).

V. 13

"Has Christ been divided up?" - Paul asks, Do some in your church have one brand of Christ and others have a different brand?

If we all have the same one and only Christ, shouldn't we have unity around Him?

"'Has Christ been divided and different parts handed out to different people?' The very idea is grotesque and must be rejected. Paul did not preach one Christ, Apollos another and Peter another. There is but one Savior and one Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9)." (Wiersbe, p. 569).

Paul says: "Don't be partially loyal to me, I was not crucified for you, was I?"

We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).

V. 17

Just as Jesus did not baptize people (Jn. 4:1-2), so both Peter (Acts 10:48) and Paul allowed their associates to baptize new converts (Wiersbe, p. 570).

Paul wasn't against baptism. He was against people's wrong assumptions that he baptized in his own name. Christ did not send Paul to baptize in his own name but to evangelize.

"Christ sent me not to baptize" - If baptism saved people, Paul certainly would have been sent to do it.

To diffuse the Corinthians' carnal, over-inflated view of men, Paul straightens them out by referring to himself and other spiritual leaders as mere:

1.Ministers (*diakonoi* - servants - 3:5-7)
2.Laborers (3:9)
3.Managers (attendants & stewards - 4:1)

Paul says, don't limit yourself to one man when you can benefit from all - I Cor. 3:21-22 - READ 4:6.

CONCLUSION:

--Division is good in math. . . but bad in a church.

--Banana splits are enjoyable. . . church splits are not.

Four attitudes that promote unity:

1. **Unselfishness**(Acts 4:32 - "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.)

2. **Humility**(Phil. 2:2 - "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.)

3. **Compassion & love**(I Pet. 3:8 - "Finally, be ye all of one mind,
having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous")

4. **Peace**(Eph. 4:3 - "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace")