

The unfolding of your words gives light.

The Temple of God

An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

¹⁰Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree^a and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment^b. ¹¹For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's *people*, that there are quarrels among you^c. ¹²Now 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^d." ¹³Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul^e? ¹⁴I thank God that

^a 1:10 **Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree.** Paul uses this kind of language regularly. This *exhorting* or *begging* is a more tender way of appealing to the people than commanding them, although he had the authority to do so. The call is to unity.

The word "agree" comes from two words meaning *to say the same*. This does not mean that every decision of the congregation was to be unanimous. I think Paul's point is that their fellowship was based on bigger things than their views of trivial matters. As we will see, the people preferred certain leaders over others. Paul did not call them to change their preferences. He called them to unify around matters bigger than personal preference.

A married couple should not split up over a quarrel about sex, money, in-laws, children or household responsibilities because there should be a bigger mission that bonds them together. Two church members should not split over extra-biblical disagreements because they have unity in the essentials of faith in Christ.

Philip Melancthon, a close associate of Martin Luther during the Protestant Reformation, summarized the attitude to which Paul called the Corinthians: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

^b 1:10 **and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.** Paul sets a contrast. The word translated "divisions" was used commonly of a tear in a garment. The one word translated "made complete" was used in the New Testament era of fishermen mending nets (Matthew 4:21). He tells them their business is mending rather than tearing apart.

^c 1:11 **For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.** Paul did not respond to an unsigned complaint. We do not know for sure who Chloe is. Her Greek name would suggest that she was not of Hebrew descent but came to faith during Paul's eighteen-month stay in Corinth. Perhaps Chloe was a respected woman in the congregation who carried messages between the church and Paul. She may have been a wealthy widow because the text implies that she had "people" (implied word inserted by the translators).

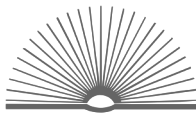
This was not gossip but open confrontation. Chloe may have been even present as this letter was first read to the congregation.

^d 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."** In the few years since Paul had left Corinth an impressive assortment of preachers had taught the people of Corinth. Apollos and Peter (Cephas) represented the strong Greek and Hebrew factions in the church. The party spirit makes you want to identify with another because it makes you look better.

"Christ's party" was likely less loyal to Christ as they were disloyal to the Paul, Apollos and Peter crowds. Paul does want that kind of spirit directed toward himself or even Christ. He proceeds to ask three probing questions about real unity.

^e 1:13 **Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?** These three questions point out what should identify the people. There is one Lord: Christ. There is one faith: that which is in the cross of Christ. There is one baptism: that which identifies us as followers of Christ. Paul was not against respecting gifted

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians
Steven Svendsen, Sr.



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I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one would say you were baptized in my name^a. ¹⁶Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other^b. ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel^c, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void^d.^a

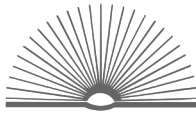
church leaders. In fact he later encouraged them to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

^a 1:14-15 **I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name.** Like Chloe, we do not know for sure who Crispus and Gaius are. It does not matter because Paul's point is that Crispus and Gaius find their identity in Christ regardless of who put them into the waters of baptism.

^b 1:16 **Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.** This is evidence of God's use of individual personalities in His inspired word. As he was writing Paul remembered another family in Corinth that he baptized. He adds them just to set the record straight.

^c 1:17 **For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel.** This is one more example from Scripture that while water baptism is important, our focus must be on the message that saves. There is no merit in baptism but there is merit in the work of Jesus on the cross.

^d 1:17 **so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.** What makes the cross "void" is any human deeds put forward that exalt man. Party divisions exalt man. Party divisions exalt those who belong to the parties. The book of Galatians was written because of this kind of man-centered, cross-diminishing legalism.



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^a 1:10-17 It is odd that so much emotion gets poured into party loyalties. People defend their athletic teams, their entertainers and their political candidates nearly as much as they defend their faith. Jesus is not your favorite quarterback nor is He running for office.

Peter learned this on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:4-8). When he saw the glory of his Master unveiled he knew that Elijah and Moses and Jesus were not simply team leaders to choose from.

Unity is all about the gospel. How to avoid petty quarrels in the church:

1. Make sure you know what binds you to these people. Is it politics or music preferences or the way you educate your kids that brings you unity?
2. Follow good leaders without idolizing them. Our media age has blessed us with access to the resources of a lot of very effective Christian teachers. But the more you know of them the more you see why they are only followed while they are following Christ.
3. Keep your emphasis on the cross. The gospel reminds you that you are just like the sinner with whom you disagree. Your identity is not rooted in being right. It is rooted in being redeemed.