

Studies in 1 Corinthians

► LESSON V: *Beyond Division, Towards Unity*

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:13-17, 30

13 Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! **14** I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. **16** (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) **17** For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.

30 God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. **31** Therefore, as the Scriptures say, “If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.”

Review

In our last study, we discussed the problem of **division** inside and outside of the Lord's church. Factions are not a new problem—the early church faced plenty of them. By putting various traveling evangelists up on a pedestal, the Christians at Corinth were unwittingly creating division. There must have been some amount of pride in saying, “I am of Paul” or “I follow Apollos.” It was popular in this age to debate various philosophical perspectives (Acts 17), so it is not surprising that some believers would choose a Christian “philosopher” to follow, so to speak. However, Paul argues that Christ will not share his reign with others. The Corinthians would either follow Jesus as Lord with an undivided heart, or else be left with nothing.

In this study, we will seek to come to a better understanding of the causes of division and discuss ways to prevent division from happening in the present day church.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Read the following scriptures and try to understand how a division happens:
 - a. Jude 1:17-19
 - b. 1 Corinthians 3:3
 - c. 1 Timothy 5:13
 - d. Titus 1:11

2. How can we prevent division from undermining the work of God in this congregation? See:
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:10
 - b. 1 Corinthians 12:25
 - c. Romans 16:17
 - d. Titus 3:10
 - e. Colossians 4:6
 - f. Jude 1:20-24
 - g. Ephesians 4:2-6

3. Some argue that Paul, in verse 17, is differentiating baptism as separate and distinct from the Gospel. Does this view make sense, given the context of the discussion or the grammatical structure of the verse?
 - a. What is Paul really trying to say? (cf. vv 14-15)
 - b. How was baptism being misunderstood in ancient Corinth? (vv. 13)
 - c. How do verses 30 & 31 help to put everything into perspective?