

Forgetting what lies behind

One word

Communion

Unity

Selfless

Encourage

Determined

UNITED OR UNTIED?

- **1 Corinthians 1:10** I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. **Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.**

- Spelling mistake:
- “To profess faith in Christ is to be united with him, and if we are united with him then are united with his body, the Church.”
- The difference between being united as a church or united from the church is where you place the “I.” When “I” have the wrong attitude, when “I” want my way, when “I” consider myself to be more important than others in the church, then there is disunity. Then we are united instead of united.
- **John 17:13-26** "Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy. 14 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. 15 I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do. 17 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. 18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. 19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

- 20 "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. 21 I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.
- 22 "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. 23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. 24 Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!
- 25 "O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. 26 I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."
- **Unity is a constant concern for the Church in any time and at any place.** Think about how many of the churches Paul wrote to and his passionate pleading with them to work on their unity and to avoid those things that divide.

- **Romans 16:17-19** And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. **Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught.**
- The two places in **Corinthians**, one that we are talking about this morning.
- **Ephesians 4:2-5** Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. **3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit**, binding yourselves together with peace. **4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. **5** There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.
- **Philippians 2:1-4** Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? **2** Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, **and working together with one mind and purpose.**
- **3** Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. **4** Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

- **Colossians 3:12-15** Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. **14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.**
- **Titus 3:9-11** Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time. **10 If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them.** 11 For people like that have turned away from the truth, and their own sins condemn them.
- **Jude 17-19** But you, my dear friends, must remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ said. 18 They told you that in the last times there would be scoffers whose purpose in life is to satisfy their ungodly desires. **19 These people are the ones who are creating divisions among you.** They follow their natural instincts because they do not have God's Spirit in them.

- **The Challenge to be One:**
- **I Corinthians 1:10** I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.
- Among all the problems the church at Corinth was facing, division is the first Paul addresses. All the other problems flow out of a congregation that is divided. They were divided over spiritual gifts, over worship, over their ethics and more. But these were the results of a much deeper schism, a root of all the rest.
- On the strength of the name of Christ, for there is no other name that commands such attention, Paul makes this appeal: **be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.**
- Wouldn't it be nice if we all thought the same way about things? The problem is again the "I" factor!

- **What does divide us...**

- Paul got word from friends that there were troubles in Corinth. A church without troubles can expect that peace to be broken at some point. It's only a matter of time...

- I Corinthians 1:11-12 For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. 12 Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."

- Various parties had emerged among the Christians at Corinth. It is important to understand the different parties because it seems they all recur regularly in the Church.

- That which divides us does not go away that easily. Isn't it amazing that we inherit the troubles of those that pass on the church to us? What happened 30 years ago still affects us today.

- **Consider these 4 parties and the attitudes that divide us:**
- **The “Looking back” party** – This is the “I follow Paul” party. Paul planted the church in Corinth and so some saw him as a spiritual father. They were nostalgic and remembered the revival that brought them to faith. Some wanted to relive those days and keep the feeling alive.
 - That is key considering that this division and perhaps most all division in the church is more about who we don’t like than about doctrine.
 - Personality clashes indicate more of a failure or refusal to let God’s love change us in our attitudes to others.
 - When people don’t like each other and sit down to discuss matters they will find things to disagree on. If I have a relationship with someone I am less likely to pick a fight – that’s a fact.
 - Those that want to relive the ‘old days’ will find progress to be a threat. It’s hard to leave the past behind when the present doesn’t fit your mold or model.

- **The “Young & Intellectual” party** – This is the “I follow Apollos” party. Apollos came from Alexandria in Egypt, which was like saying he studied at Oxford and Yale with a Doctorate from Trinity.
 - He was a great speaker, had a wonderful intellect, and was able to passionately and accurately preach about Jesus that blew people away.
 - Paul was considered a little boring to listen to (remember Eutychus fell asleep and fell out of a window) so did not measure up to the fiery Apollos.
 - Some say that Apollos unwittingly introduced an intellectual elite into Corinth. Young Christians were drawn to him and it is easy for them, sometimes for all of us, to take our teaching only from a chosen guru.
 - The problem with this party was their drive for change without consideration for the feelings of others and for due process.
 - Barney Coombs “ It is not that they wanted to change things that bothers me, It is that they never even take the time to ask me why I did it the way I did in the first place”.

- **The “Traditionalist” party** – Similar to the “I follow Paul” party, the “I follow Cephas (Peter)” party looked back as well.
- But their emphasis was more on keeping traditions. These are the people who have been in the church the longest, have given the most money, and cherish the traditions of the past.
- They don’t like change, especially if it means giving up a style or way of doing things in the church, particularly if the pushy young intellectuals are behind it.
- If Peter had visited Corinth, he would have left some with the impression that there are certain things Christians do and don’t do.
- There is nothing wrong with having traditions, but often times the meaning of the traditions are lost and we are left only with the traditions. No one knows why we do this but don’t you dare change it.

- **The “Anti-hero” party** – The “Christ” group was and is the hardest to deal with.
- With the excessive attention to these personalities, Paul, Apollos, and Peter, this group would have formed as a counter to any human leadership.
- They reject this “hero” worship and claim to follow only Christ.
- They become a very anti-authority (hierarchy of the church) type of group that rejects any instruction: “Don’t tell me what to do.”
- These people eventually would consider the others too unspiritual, too uniformed, too... and form their own church or stay home.
- This can be a scary party too because they are likely to use the phrase “the Lord told me”. And how do you argue with that?

- In each party, there is that annoying little letter: “I”. There is the divisiveness that fractures the church. The challenge to be one, to be an individual with the power to choose my own way, stands in opposition of the challenge to be One, to be united with others in the name of Christ. I must give way and submit to the needs of the body. But how do we do that?
- **Only in Christ is it possible...**
- In response to this cliquishness Paul asks three questions which call our focus back to Christ.
- **1. Is Christ divided?** To allow such divisive parties to exist is like chopping Christ up into bits and to parcel him out as though his person and work came in different packages. You can't do that.
- **2. Was Paul crucified for you?** With this question Paul challenges us to drop the personality cults or private crusades and to focus on Christ.
- **3. Were you baptized in the name of Paul?** Why after the cross is this important to think about?

- Why do these things divide us as a church? In each instance it is because we have taken our eyes off of Christ. Christ is our wholeness. Christ is our salvation. Christ is our Lord. If we ever take our eyes off of him and concentrate on other people, programs or political ambitions within the church, we will have division.
- “To profess faith in Christ is to be united with him, and if we are united with him then we are united with his body, the Church.”
- Where do you place the “I” in the church?
- Are you untied, loosed from the responsibility of loving your brother or sister in the church, free to push your feelings and thoughts without concern for others feelings?
- Or are you united to the body, willing to be a servant like Christ for the sake of unity of His body?
- Where do you place your allegiance?
 - If Christ is your Lord then you know that the people of this church are a gift to you to fill in your blanks. Where you are weak, someone else is there to be strong.
 - If Christ is your Lord then your salvation at the cross binds you to these people too, who have the same salvation. That makes us family.
 - If Christ is your Lord then there is no other name which can command such power and unity among us.
- **I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.**

