**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems - #2**

**Divisions over Preachers**

**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

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***10*** *I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you may agree in what you say and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you may be united in the same mind and the same purpose.* ***11*** *For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by some of Chloe’s people that there are rivalries among you.* ***12*** *What I mean is this: One of you says, “I side with Paul!” another, “I side with Apollos!” or “I side with Cephas!” or “I side with Christ!”* ***13*** *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* ***14*** *I give thanks (to God) that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius,* ***15*** *so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name.* ***16*** *I did baptize the household of Stephanas too; otherwise I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.* ***17*** *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its meaning.*

**What was the problem?**

Paul now opens his letter with a plea for unity. Dissensions among the Christians have caused such a division and rivalry in their community that Paul considers it a serious matter. Paul makes it clear that he is commenting on reports that have come to him “*by some of Chloe’s people*” (verse 11). Chloe seems to have been a prominent Christian woman; someone known to Paul from his earlier dealings with the Corinthian church and apparently known to the rest of the Christians there, for Paul mentions her by name.

The dissensions and quarrels have been by groups arguing about different Christian preachers who have evangelized them and seem to be divided into rival groups expressing allegiance to such preachers, both to Paul himself, or Apollos, or Cephas, and even to Christ. There may have been three or four groups. There common slogan was “I take sides with” which is equal to “I am a member of this party but not the other(s).”

NT Scholars since W Bauer *Heresy and Orthodoxy in the Early Church* favored the thesis that Paul was opposed in Corinth by a Judaizing faction headed by Cephas (Peter?). But this also could have been a cult of personalities. In our modern understanding a personality cult must have a leader, even in the political arena we have seen Hitler and others.

Paul begins his argument with three main themes:

1. The disunity the factions in the Corinthian community (1:10–17; 3:4–5, 2 4; 6)
2. The fascination of that community with a certain school of wisdom-preaching (1:18–2:16; 3:18–20; 4:10)
3. How one is to estimate Christian ministry (1:17; 2:1–5; 3:1–4:13).

**Verse 10**

*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul uses ***parakaleo***, a verb denoting an urgent appeal (used 1 Cor16: 12, 15; Rom 12:1; 15:30; 16:17; 2 Cor 2:8; 10:1; Phil 4:2; 1 Thess 4:10; Phlm 10). Paul appeals as an authorized apostle (1:1; Rom 1:5), as “*the apostle of the Gentiles*” (Rom 11:13), and does not hesitate to urge or implore the Christians of Roman Corinth. He makes use of a standard literary form called “petition,” along with a divine-commission phrase. That is formulated “*in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” not in his own name, but in Christ’s name, because the divided Christians of Roman Corinth have forgotten that Christ is among them as the source of their unity. Paul addresses them as ***adelphoi***, “brothers,” i.e., fellow Christians, whether male or female, using the same term as for Sosthenes in (verse 1). This bond of brotherhood is a bond with Jesus himself. This bond is the reason for unity.

*That all of you may agree in what you say …*

Paul asks the Christians to seek the positive first, for the positive is what gives vitality to unity. No unity can be achieved by a bond of negative attitude(s). Then Paul adds …

*… that there be no dissensions among you …*

The Greek word “schism” or “dissension” is not just a word; it comes as a result from allegiance to the different preachers. Groups are normally formed around one person who fights others and the struggles for domination. Paul will speak once more of ***schismata*** (1 Cor 11:18) but this time it was dissensions at the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and possibly in 1 Corinthians 12:25 (compare John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19), where the same word denotes dissension among people.

*… united in the same mind and the same purpose*.

Paul recommends concerns not only what they say, but also how they think and plan when it comes to what is really needed for Christian unity. The use of the word “mind,” the Greek word ***nous***, does not mean only the “intellect” but also the “outlook” of the whole inner life. The “mind” in English stresses more the notion of thinking and observing, but the Greek ***nous*** stresses judging and planning. (See Phlm 14)

**Verse 11**

*For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by some of Chloe’s people.*

Literally “by those of Chloe.” She is otherwise unknown, but was in Corinth and was known to Paul. Who “the people of Chloe” actually were is not clear from the letter but it may be members of her household. Nothing in the letter itself suggests that she was the overseer of a house church.

**Verse 12**

*What I mean is this: One of you says, “I side with Paul!” another, “I side with Apollos!” or “I side with Cephas!” or “I side with Christ!”*

**Apollos’ Group**

Apollos, who was according to the Beza MS (*manuscript*) of the book of Acts (18:24–28, by Theodore Beza, June 24, 1519 - October 13, 1605, a [French](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_people) [Protestant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant) [Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian) [theologian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theologian) who collected Greek MSS), was “a Jew, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent speaker, learned in the Scriptures learned the Christian faith in his native land Egypt. He was well versed in the Bible (OT.)” Apollos came to both Ephesus and Corinth. Paul mentioned Apollos again (1 Cor 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12; see also Titus 3:13). Apollos would have arrived in Corinth only after Paul had departed. Apollos was undoubtedly responsible for the conversion of some Corinthians to Christianity. The group that is said here to use his name probably emerged after Apollos had also departed from Corinth. Paul knows that some Corinthian Christians had a high regard for Apollos and may think that they even preferred to have Apollos among them rather than himself (see 1 Cor 16:12). Was Apollos the leader of the group seeking “wisdom” since he was an eloquent preacher that Paul criticizes in (1:18–31)? His mode of interpreting Scripture may have been similar to the allegorical method of Philo of Alexandria, where the historical meaning of the text received very little attention in favor of allegorical meaning.

**Peter’s Group**

The third are saying “*but I (am) of Cephas*.” “Kephas” is the name that Paul normally uses for the apostle Simon Peter (3:22; 9:5; 15:5; Gal 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14), but “Petros” appears in Galatians 2:7–8. “Cephas” recalls the name-change by Jesus in the Gospels (John 1:42; Matt 16:17–18: “*Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah! . . . I tell you, you are Peter (Petros), and on this rock (petra) I will build my church.*”). On the basis of John 1:42, the early church interpreted “Kephas” as “Petros.” The wordplay in Matthew 16:18 has often been explained by referring to the Hebrew common noun, ***keph***, “rock” (Jer 4:29; Job 30:6).

Peter’s movements on the basis of NT evidence are not enough to re-construct a whole picture of the life and the activity of the apostle. When would Cephas have been in Corinth to teach? Paul and Apollos have preached in Corinth, this party of Cephas implies that Cephas had been there too and even evangelized the town. Perhaps, he was there on his way to Rome according to Church tradition, so that Peter arrived in Rome from Corinth. Eusebius (4th century church historian) later wrote to this effect: “That they (Peter and Paul) were martyred together at the same time, Dionysius, a bishop of the Corinthians, thus asserts in a passage of his correspondence with Roman [Christians], ‘By so great an instruction you too have linked together the planting of Romans and Corinthians that took place under Peter and Paul. For both of them planted our Corinth (church) and taught us in the same way; and likewise they taught together in Italy and were martyred at the same time.’” (History of the Church, 2.25.8). Paul does not seem to be aware that Peter has had a good work of evangelization of Corinth, because Paul says in 3:6, “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth*,” and in 3:10 “*I laid a foundation as an expert builder*”, in 4:15 “*In Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*” There is no mention of Peter at all, even in 2 Corinthians 10:14.

Certain other details in this letter are said to point to Peter’s presence in Corinth: e.g., the mention of Cephas and his wife, or Cephas’s relation to the rest of the apostles (1 Cor 9:5); God’s fellow workers (1 Cor 3:1–9) and 5:9-13 seems to echo the Antioch controversy of (Gal 2:11-14).

If Peter was the apostle of the Jews, some Jewish Christians devotees of Peter, to whom he may have preached elsewhere, have migrated to Corinth and formed this third group. But here Paul is not arguing against Peter, as he once did (Gal 2:11, 14), but he is arguing only against Peter’s group.

**Christ’s Group**

“*I side with Christ.*”

This is the last statement that suggests that there was a fourth group in Corinth that so identified itself. NT scholars have said that these may be Jewish Christians, who would not accept Paul, because he is the “apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13), or who regarded Jesus as “the promised Messiah” and dissociated themselves from Paul’s attitude and teaching on the Law. Was there actually a “fourth” group? The identification of those who might use this phrase as a slogan is more problematic than the other three. Did Paul put Christ on the same level as himself, Apollos, and Cephas? In other words did Paul see this group as looking at Jesus Christ as just a teacher like the rest? Later in 3:22 Paul mentions only himself, Apollos, and Cephas and declares that Corinthian Christians belong to Christ. Hence Christ was not just a mere teacher. Interpreters ever since the time of John Chrysostom have concluded that only three rival groups are mentioned.

Hence, “*I side with Christ*” may have been the attitude of some who did not want to join the other three groups, or it could be the irony of Paul who himself joined these Corinthian Christians to reduce them to absurdity, as if to say, “You acknowledge human preachers, but I Paul with some of you acknowledge only Christ.” Such an understanding of the fourth statement agrees with verse 13, where Paul asks whether they were not dividing Christ. (Cf. 2 Cor 10:7, where Paul may be giving yet another answer to this problem: “*If anyone is confident that he belongs to Christ, let him remind himself that as he sides with Christ, so do we too.*) The phrase, however, may represent what all Christians should be saying, as in 1 Corinthians 3:23: “*You belong to Christ, and Christ to God.*”

**The Crucial Question**

**Verse 13**

*Is Christ divided?*

Literally it is more drastic because it means, “Has Christ been broken in pieces?” This seems to be a question repeated three times and makes it likely that Paul is speaking only of three groups, which he considers to be divisive of Christ.

Let as look carefully at this question:

1. It is not an accusation.
2. Nor does the question insinuate a rejection of Christ in favor of one of his disciples (Paul, Cephas, or Apollos).
3. The question leads to the heart of the problem; the church in Corinth is divided indeed by such strife. That situation affects its relation to Christ himself, who died for all without distinction, in whose name all have been baptized, and in him they have all been called (1:9). Christ is one and cannot be divided; so his church should not be divided either.

This is a great pastoral approach to a burning problem …

**Personal Question**

*Was Paul crucified for you?*

Literally this is asking, “Paul was not crucified for you, was he?” The sentence is introduced by expecting an answer: “No.” Paul singles himself out, and does not mention the others (Cephas or Apollos). Instead, to stress the central point missed by the factious groups, the question really is: Who is your Savior? If the death of Christ on the cross has brought salvation to them (Rom 4:25), what is the quarrel all about? Then, if the death of Christ is the root of their baptism and they were baptized in the name of the Lord, were they baptized in the name of Paul? Again the answer is “No.”

**The Use of a Common Liturgical Formula to Heal the Division**

Paul is imitating an early Christian formula “*be baptized in the name of …*” (See, Matt 28:19; Acts 8:16; 19:5; Acts 10:48; in Acts 2:38; cf. Rom 6:3- 4; 1 Cor 12:13). This has been debated and will continue to be debated. In the NT itself the name of the Lord Jesus itself has many functions:

1. It is the name of the Mediator and the Guarantor of the New Covenant. So to be submerged in water in the name of the Lord is to cross over to the new covenant like those who crossed the Red Sea to the freedom from bondage (1 Cor 10:1-14).
2. It is the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11-15).
3. Baptism is the sharing of the death, burial, resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:1-8) so there is no room any more for quarreling since we have a new life.

**A Note from Philemon**

Why is Baptism forgotten by us? Well, this is due to the fact that our pre-baptismal catechesis does not tell us that when you are baptized, your life no longer is yours any more. It is shared with Jesus. Our endeavor for a private life comes from one source, that is our extreme self-love that does not allow us sharing.

**Baptized By Paul**

**Verse 14**

*I give thanks [to God] that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius.*

Paul was responsible for the evangelization of Corinth, but here he admits, with irony, that he baptized only a few Corinthians. His mission is not to administer baptism. “I give thanks to God” is missing in the important Greek MSS.

Crispus (or ***Krispos***) was the “leader of the synagogue” in Corinth (Acts 18:8), who “put his faith in the Lord.” This is the same individual, whom Paul now says he baptized. Gaïos of Corinth is the same as Gaius whom Paul calls his “host” and the host of “the whole church” (Rom 16:23), i.e., the church of Corinth that probably met in his house.

Baptism is participation or union with Christ through faith. Baptism incorporates us into Christ and unites us to the church (1 Cor 12:13). This must have already existed in the pre-Pauline Christian tradition, but it is Paul who has developed its significance (esp. in his Letter to the Romans chapter 6 and 1 Cor 12:12-13). Through baptism the Christians participate in phases of death of Christ (Rom 6:4-5), die to the law and to sin (Rom 6:6, 10; 7:4); they are said to have “grown into union with him” (Rom 6:5); so that they now share his risen life and have been baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13).

**Verse 15**

*So that no one can say that you were baptized in my name*.

Paul insists that no one belongs to him for no one is baptized in his name. No one in these groups of Corinth can claim Paul. Some interpreters have argued that this was the nature of the rival groups, that Corinthians who had been baptized by a certain preacher developed a bond of allegiance to him. Paul denies such a claim.

**Verse 16**

*I did baptize the household of Stephanas too.*

This refers to his ***oikos***, “household,” i.e., his family. J Jeremias argued that “household” is a reference to infant baptism in the early church (See Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, new edition 2007). Stephanas and his household are mentioned again in 1 Corinthians 16:15), where they are called “the first fruits of Achaia” and are said to “*have devoted themselves to the service of God’s dedicated people.*” His Greek name may suggest that he was an immigrant. Stephanas came to Ephesus with other delegates (1 Cor 16:17).

**Paul’s Mission Statement**

**Verse 17**

*For Christ did not send me to baptize …*

Paul did not mean to undermine the value of baptism (See Rom 6:1-8). It reveals only how Paul understands his own mission to preach the gospel. Others can baptize, but Paul must preach, because he was called by God to preach his son “among the Gentiles” (Gal 1:16).

*… but to preach the gospel.*

This means to proclaim the good news of salvation that comes through Christ Jesus “*and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its meaning.*” Literally, “not with the wisdom of word/speech, lest there be emptied the cross of Christ.” This is the core of the good news.

***Pope’s Notes***

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