

## First Epistle to the Corinthians

### 2 – Essay One: The Cross and Unity – Problem (1.1)

1 Corinthians 1:10-16

[Paul's] point is that any division is wrong, even one based on the claim to be of Christ alone and so rejecting Paulinists and followers of Apollos.<sup>1</sup>

*What defines Christian community? What is the appropriate focus for Christians?*

1. First Essay (1 Corinthians 1:10-4:16 [4:21?])
  - a. ESV SB Outline<sup>2</sup>
    - i. Divisions over Christian Preachers (1:10–4:21)
      1. The problem reported (1:10–17a)
      2. God's wisdom answers the problem (1:17b–4:21)
        - a. The nature of God's wisdom (1:17b–2:16)
        - b. God's wisdom applied to Apollos, Paul, and the Corinthians (3:1–4:21)
    - ii. Theme: Since the church is the dwelling place of God's Spirit, the people who make up the church should work for unity by building each other up.
  - b. *Reading Corinthians* Outline<sup>3</sup>
    - i. Request Formula, three questions (1:10-13)
      1. Is Christ divided?
      2. Was Paul crucified for you?
      3. Were you baptized in the name of Paul?
    - ii. Rhetorical Questions Answered (1:14-4:7)
      1. First answer (to third question) (1:14-16)
      2. Second answer (to second question) (1:17-3:4)
      3. Third answer (to first question) (3:5-4:7)
    - iii. Conclusion (4:8-21)
      1. A contrast (4:8-13)
      2. An exhortation (4:14-17)
      3. A warning (4:18-21)
  - c. Bailey's Outline<sup>4</sup>
    - i. **A.** The Problem: Divisions, Baptism, and the Cross (1:10-16)
    - ii. **B.** The Wisdom and Power of God: The Cross (1:17-2:2)
    - iii. **B.** The Wisdom of God: Revealed Through the Spirit (2:3-16)
    - iv. **A.** Christian Unity: Paul, Apollos, and Cephas as One (3:1-4:16)
2. Outlines on presenting the problem section (1:10-16)
  - a. *ESVSB* sees straightforward declaration of reported division
  - b. Outline, *Reading Corinthians*<sup>5</sup>
    - i. Three requests (1:10)

<sup>1</sup> *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*; 1 Cor. 1:12

<sup>2</sup> *English Standard Version: Study Bible*; Introduction to 1 Corinthians

<sup>3</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, OliveTree e-book

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*; Kindle ed., location 679

<sup>5</sup> This commentary sees the problem reporting between vv. 10-13, then the response from Paul beginning with v. 14. The first response continues through v. 16. There is very little more said for these sections.

- ii. Two basis for requests (1:11-13)
  - 1. Chloe's people reports problems
  - 2. Three rhetorical questions; each calls for a negative answer
- iii. First question: Were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1:14-16)
  - 1. Response: No, with a few exceptions
- c. Outline, Bailey: Essay 1, Section 1 (1:10-16)<sup>6</sup>
  - i. **A.** Jesus / Name of Jesus (1:10a)
  - ii. **B.** Divisions (1:10b)
  - iii. **C.** Be united (1:10c)
  - iv. **C'.** There is quarreling (1:11)
  - v. **B'.** Divisions (1:12-13a)
  - vi. **A'.** Jesus / Name of Paul? (1:13b)
  - vii. *Aside* – parenthetical comment (1:14-16)

	First half	Second half
A	I appeal to you, brothers, by the <b>name</b> of our Lord Jesus Christ...	Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the <b>name</b> of Paul?
B	... That all of you agree, and that there be no <b>divisions</b> among you...	What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ <b>divided</b> ?
C	... But that you be <b>united</b> in the same mind and the same judgment.	For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is <b>quarreling</b> among you, my brothers.
	I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) (ESV)	

- 3. Background information<sup>7</sup>
  - a. For about three centuries, Christians met primarily in homes. Size of home determined size of congregation. As this letter continues, it becomes clear that social stratification was the primary basis of the division reported in the Corinthian church.
  - b. Chloe was likely a wealthy businesswoman. Her people would likely have been her servants or slaves.
  - c. It was common for disciples to follow after prominent teachers and identify with them. Paul's position is that any claim that results in division is wrong, even if the claim is "Christ alone."
- 4. Details
  - a. I appeal to you (1:10)
    - i. Foundation of appeal is in the *Introduction* (1:1-9)
      - 1. Gospel tradition (testimony about Christ) (1:6)
      - 2. Jesus is the source of grace and gifts (1:4-5)
      - 3. Only Jesus can sustain believers to the end (1:8)
      - 4. All believers are called to be in fellowship in Christ (1:9)

<sup>6</sup> Bailey, loc. 685

<sup>7</sup> IVP BBC NT, 1 Cor. 1:10-17

- ii. "Appeal": A strong word that longs for reconciliation
  - 1. Word used in Prodigal parable, Luke 15:28
    - a. But he [older son] was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. (ESV)
- b. Name of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:10)
  - i. Alludes to baptismal formula (baptism mentioned shortly)
  - ii. "Our Lord Jesus Christ" appears four times in chapter 1, then disappears until chapter 15 – implies *inclusio*
- c. Agree, and no divisions (1:10)
  - i. "All of you agree"; lit., "all of you speak [*legete*] the same thing"
  - ii. "No divisions [*schismata*]" – lit., no splits
    - 1. A canvas tent (Paul was tentmaker) with splits is not much use
  - iii. "Be united"; lit., "Be perfectly joined together [*katartizo/katertismenoi*]"
    - 1. Language used of artisans and craftsmanship; e.g., brass vessel whose parts must fit together precisely to be of usefulness and value
  - iv. Same mind [*nous/noi*] and judgment [*gnome*<sup>8</sup>]
    - 1. Mind: the intellect; knowledge
    - 2. Judgment: the use of the mind; discernment, purpose, intention
- d. "There is quarreling" (1:11)
  - i. Quarreling [*eris/erides*]
  - ii. Eris (strife). "Greek goddess of chaos, strife and discord, her name being translated into Latin as Discordia. 'Discordia' means discord. Her Greek opposite is Harmonia, whose Latin counterpart is Concordia."<sup>9</sup>

The most famous tale of Eris recounts her initiating the Trojan War by causing the Judgement of Paris. The goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite had been invited along with the rest of Olympus to the forced wedding of Peleus and Thetis, who would become the parents of Achilles, but Eris had been snubbed because of her troublemaking inclinations.

She therefore (as mentioned at the Kypria according to Proclus as part of a plan hatched by Zeus and Themis) tossed into the party the Apple of Discord, a golden apple inscribed τῇ καλλίστῃ (Ancient Greek: *tē(i) kallistē(i)*) – "For the most beautiful one", or "To the Fairest One" – provoking the goddesses to begin quarreling about the appropriate recipient. The hapless Paris, Prince of Troy, was appointed to select the fairest by Zeus. The goddesses stripped naked to try to win Paris' decision, and also attempted to bribe him. Hera offered political power; Athena promised skill in battle; and Aphrodite tempted him with the most beautiful woman in the world: Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta. While Greek culture placed a greater emphasis on prowess and power, Paris chose to award the apple to Aphrodite, thereby dooming his city, which was destroyed in the war that ensued.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This has nothing to do with little humanoid creatures of mythology.

<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eris\\_\(mythology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eris_(mythology))

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

iii. Her brother, Ares (Mars), the Greek (Roman) god of war<sup>11</sup>

... Eris (Contention), his [Ares'] twin-sister and companion, who always precedes his chariot when he rushes to the fight, the latter being evidently a simile of the poets to express the fact that war follows contention... This divinity [Eris] was never invoked by mortals, except when they desired her assistance for the accomplishment of evil purposes.<sup>12</sup>

- iv. Paul depicting not just a minor disagreement, but an all-out battle in the church/Corinth that was tearing it apart (split/schism, 1:10)
- e. Factional quarrels (1:12)
- i. Some commentaries state that there were really just two factions, Paul and Apollos, and that the other two are probably hypothetical examples<sup>13</sup>
  - ii. Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ – proxies for actual leaders of factions
    1. Why? To call out the leaders by name may have unnecessarily inflamed the situation and placed Chloe in an untenable situation.
    2. Paul wants to address a broader issue than just the specific problem of factional leaders
    3. Ethnic divisions: Roman, Greek, Jews
      - a. Paul – Roman; Apollos – Greek; Cephas [using the Jewish form of Peter] – Jews
      - b. Issue: Ethnic loyalty stronger than loyalty to faith community
    4. What about “I follow Christ”?
      - a. Issue: “We are of Christ and the rest of you are not”
      - b. Judgmentalism and condemnation; self-righteousness
  - iii. “Is Christ divided?” – The expected response is an emphatic “**NO!**”
    1. Returns to theme of Jesus Christ as sole source of grace, gifts, and community
  - iv. The Corinthians were saying different things instead of the same thing (c.f., 1:10)
    1. What is the “same thing” that Paul wants believers to say?
- f. What shall believers unite around? (1:13)
- i. Paul asks additional questions
    1. Who was crucified for you [*plural*]? Paul?
      - a. No, Jesus Christ
    2. Into what, whose name, were you [*plural*] baptized? Paul?
      - a. No, Jesus Christ
    3. A shift from the Corinthians’ statements of “I” to Paul’s inclusion through “we”
      - a. The church is not about what “I” want, but what is good for the entire community
  - ii. Paul invokes two core tenets of Christianity
    1. The cross: God’s offer of grace and gifts
    2. Baptism: Believers’ response to the cross, the acceptance of grace and gifts

<sup>11</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ares>

<sup>12</sup> E.M. Berens, *Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome*, The Project Gutenberg eBook, p. 135

<sup>13</sup> See in *IVP BBC NT*, 1 Cor. 1:12

- a. But Paul has already implied in the *Introduction* that the Corinthians, although baptized, have so far failed to accept the cross (1:5, 7)
  - i. Paul thanks God for the grace and gifts given to the Corinthians, but there is no mention of thanks for their faith
- g. The *Aside* (1:14-16)
  - i. Crispus: A former ruler of the synagogue at Corinth (Acts 18:8)
  - ii. Gaius: Corinthian who hosted Paul and the entire church in Corinth (Rom. 16:23)
  - iii. Stephanas: First convert in Achaia (1 Cor. 16:15) and brought Paul some of the written concerns regarding the church at Corinth. Likely carried finished letter back to Corinth.
  - iv. This aside gives a glimpse into how Paul writes (loose, unstructured, and a bit scattered) when he is not following a formal, rhetorical pattern

#### 5. Summary Points<sup>14</sup>

- a. Ethnic divisions are unacceptable. Loyalty must not center on human leadership.
- b. No group has the right to claim they alone are loyal to Christ.
- c. “Our Lord Jesus Christ” is the only rightful center and source of unity.
- d. The cross and baptism form the central pillars of the believing community.
- e. Christianity is not about *me*; it’s about *us*.

The question is not “Who is *my* leader?” but rather, “Who died for *us*?”<sup>15</sup>

- #### 6. Thought questions. (Some of these will become easier to answer as we continue through the letter.)
- a. What are differences between divisions (schism/split) and disagreements?
  - b. How can we be united in purpose and intent, while allowing individual and group distinctiveness?
  - c. What are differences between “following Jesus” and holding to “our Lord Jesus Christ”?
  - d. What are differences between “following Jesus” and “gathering at his cross”?
  - e. How might we see things differently if, instead of claiming “I/we follow Christ” we say, “We gather at the cross of Christ”?
  - f. What does it mean for the cross and baptism to be the central tenets of Christianity?
  - g. What is the “same thing” that Paul wants us to say? Apparently it isn’t “I follow Christ”...
  - h. How can we determine what things are truly important to distinguish between right and wrong?
  - i. How do we respond to someone or a group that we believe is truly wrong on a vital issue?

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<sup>14</sup> Bailey, loc. 731

<sup>15</sup> Bailey, loc. 736