

Iglesia de Carne

Studies in First Corinthians

Text

First Corinthians 1:10-17

Topic

The apostle Paul pleads with the believers in Corinth to maintain unity and to quit dividing into factions over himself, Apollos, Peter, and Jesus

Title

“Come Together, Right Now - Pleaded Me”

Anastasia Davydova... Natalia Ishchenko... Svetlana Romashina. No, they are not Natasha's sisters in the upcoming *Black Widow* film. They are real Russians who have won the most gold medals in their sport - five apiece.

Their sport was originally known as “Water Ballet.” In 2017 its name was changed to “Artistic Swimming.” You probably still refer to it as “Synchronized Swimming.”

It is a hybrid form of swimming, dance, and gymnastics, consisting of swimmers performing a synchronized routine of elaborate moves in the water, accompanied by music.

We use the idiom, “in synch,” or “out of synch” to mean *working well or working badly together*.

The believers in Corinth were definitely *out* of synch. In our text today we'll see it said of them that there were “contentions” leading to “divisions.”

To help them get back in synch, the apostle Paul will emphasize the body of Jesus in two ways:

1. His mystery body on the earth, the church.
2. His physical body lifted up from the earth, on the Cross.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 You Are To Perform As The Body Of Jesus On The Earth, and #2 You Are To Preach That Jesus' Body Was Lifted Up From The Earth.

#1 You Are To Perform
As The Body Of Jesus On The Earth
(v10-11)

The human body was one of the apostle Paul's favorite illustrations for the proper performing of the church. In chapter twelve he will write, "For as the [human] body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." (v12 & 27).

As we begin, in verse ten, Paul is thinking about the church as a body. You may not see it at first, but it's there in his choice of words.

1Co 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Paul definitely had the body of Christ in mind. "Joined together" is a medical term. It is (and I quote), "used of knitting together bones that have been fractured, or joining together a joint that has been dislocated."

He was reminding the believers in Corinth that collectively they were like a human body. In their case, it was a body that was dislocated and fractured.

He mentions having the "same mind." A body requires a mind. The Corinthians had a mind of their own. We are told, as believers, to "have the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2).

One way we have His mind is by submitting to His authority as the Head of the body, letting Him direct the body.

Finally, "judgement" can be translated *purpose*. We are the body of Jesus on the earth, and with Him as our Head we ought to perform the purpose(s) that He desires and directs.

Instead, the church in Corinth was marked by "divisions." Divisions in the earthly body of Jesus would be like your body suffering a dislocation or a

fracture. At very least, it would halt any progress. If left untreated, it could be devastating.

1Co 1:11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's *household*, that there are contentions among you.

“Chloe” seems to have been a well-to-do businesswoman in the city of Ephesus. Paul was in Ephesus at the time. She undoubtedly was saved through his preaching of the Gospel.

Some of her “household” stewards - also believers - went on a business trip, and Corinth was one of their stops. While there, they visited with the church and attended a service or two.

Think of how excited they must have been looking forward to fellowship with believers in another town. Their excitement didn't last long. As Marlin put it to Dory, “Good feeling's gone.”

Hanging with the Corinthian Christians was more of a bummer than a blessing. They witnessed “contentions.” They must also have witnessed many of the other terrible things occurring there, telling Paul all about it upon their return.

In elementary school, the lowest you could go, the absolute rock-bottom you could sink to, socially, was to be labeled a Tattle-Tale.

Was this tattling? Backbiting? Gossip? No; it was “declared.” It's a legal term; it was something like a deposition. Paul used the term to divest their report from any hint of impropriety. Besides, what they reported was going on openly, publicly.

There were “contentions.” This is elsewhere called a work of the flesh. It means *disputing* rather than *discussing*.

The best contemporary example I can give has to do with believers who are drawn to what has been called New Calvinism. Others in the movement label themselves “Young, Restless and Reformed.”

I want to be respectful and not exaggerate or misrepresent as I present this. The New Calvinists I'm talking about are usually friends of yours who have come under the influence of certain Bible teachers who rabidly promote what are commonly known as the Five Points of Calvinism as the only true biblical theology. Anyone who doesn't agree with them is more than just ignorant; they may be a heretic. All that they want to talk about is their doctrine - it's ‘rightness,’ and your ‘wrongness.’

In essence, they expend all their energy trying to convert saints to their system, rather than converting sinners to the Savior.

Let me cut to the chase. It is disputing, rather than discussing; and it's contentions have led to unnecessary yet severe divisions. I could cite several churches - some Calvary Chapel's - that have agonizingly split over these contentions. We have seen believers affected by this over the years and leave our own fellowship.

I'm not going to get into the doctrine, except to say this. One of their arguments is that there is no biblical, intelligent, scholarly alternatives to their position. If you have never studied it for yourself, it sounds convincing. It's not true. Calvinism is not the only theology in town. It's not even a good one.

Causing division is just as wrong, just as evil, today as it was in first century Corinth.

There was a phrase back in verse ten - "that you all speak the same thing." It doesn't mean we will always agree on everything. Unity does not require uniformity. It has more to do with the spirit of our interactions.

Albert Barnes wrote, "On the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, Christians may be agreed; on all points in which they differ they may evince a good spirit; and on all subjects they may express their sentiments in the language of the Bible, and thus "speak the same thing."

Why can't we do that? One reason is because we elevate some doctrine, or some position, to an essential, rather than a non-essential. It's not just the New Calvinists. There are King James Only groups... Groups that teach you must be baptized to be saved... Or that you must speak in tongues... Or keep the Sabbath. To them, those things are as important as the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Anytime a non-essential is elevated to an essential, contentions will lead to divisions to our detriment. As the body of Jesus on the earth, our purpose isn't to go into all the world converting sinners to New Calvinism... Or to King James Only. It is to share Jesus Christ. We make disciples, *not* divisions.

#2 You Are To Preach
That Jesus' Body Was Lifted Up From The Earth
(v12-17)

The question we should have at this point is, "What is it we all agree on?" Or we could put it this way: "What should we all speak the same thing about?"

Paul tells us it is the Cross (v17) upon which Jesus was crucified (v13).

- In verse twenty-three he further says, "We preach Christ crucified..."
- In chapter two, verse two, we read, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Paul will fill-out the Cross in chapter fifteen, explaining the Gospel by saying:

1 Cor 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,
1Co 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
1Co 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Jesus, referring to His death on the Cross, said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all people to Myself" (John 12:32).

Theologian Roger Olson proves this baseline for belief: "I would say he or she must believe in the God of the biblical revelation, creator and sustainer of all that exists outside of Himself, and that God became uniquely incarnate as Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human, crucified for our redemption and raised bodily for our new life, and that our only hope of salvation is in God's grace through Jesus Christ accepted by faith."

We simply cannot afford contentions and divisions that by their very existence undermine lifting-up Jesus on the Cross.

1Co 1:12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

A long time ago, in a sanctuary far, far away, Pam and I were visiting Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, where Greg Laurie pastors. He came out after the worship, and before the teaching, and gently rebuked the church. Apparently whenever the believers knew beforehand that Greg would be out of town, and one of the assistants would be teaching, attendance went down by half. It kinda means people were only coming to hear Greg - not to meet with Jesus. Point taken.

Do you have a favorite Bible teacher? Either to listen to, or to read? There are guys I'd rather listen to or read more than others.

I don't think there's necessarily anything wrong with that; and I don't think it is what Paul meant; at least, that isn't all that he meant.

If it was anything like it is today, most likely these groups were appealing to Paul or Apollos or Cephas to defend their behavior. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas had very different emphases in their ministries:

- Paul was known for, and criticized for, his emphasis on God's super-abounding grace. He emphasized it so much that in one place he made sure he explained that we shouldn't sin just so that grace might abound (Romans 6:1). Later in this letter we will see some of the believers celebrating sexual sin as if it was causing grace to abound. Who knows? Maybe they thought it was the kind of grace Paul would recommend.
- Apollos is described in the Bible as "eloquent" and "mighty in the Scriptures." That was *before* he understood, and was filled with, the Holy Spirit. People were obviously taken by his oratory more than the Lord's anointing. A big problem Paul will deal with in this letter is the preference the Corinthians had for man's wisdom versus God's wisdom. A contemporary example would be the introduction of secular psychology into the church. Believers think it a wisdom of man that is somehow needed even though we have God the Holy Spirit as our on-board counselor, and the Word of God to divide between our soul and our spirit. The Apollos group may have been like that - thinking it was OK to bring in to the church the wisdom of man.
- Cephas is another name for the apostle Peter. He had a tendency to hold on to Jewish traditions. It got him into trouble when he visited the church in Antioch. At first he ate meals with Gentile believers. But when some Jews came, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles, and would only eat with his fellow Jews. Paul had to rebuke Peter publicly (Galatians 2). There were Jews in this mostly Gentile church in Corinth. It is believed that Peter visited Corinth, and we could speculate that he affected the Jewish believers similarly to Antioch.

What about the "I'm of Christ" folks? Well, it was about 54AD. There were still lots of people alive who had seen Jesus before His death on the Cross in the 30's. It's possible there were those in Corinth who could say they had seen Him, heard Him. Maybe they thought they needed no human teacher.

It's not unlike believers today who refuse to attend church because they worship Jesus everywhere but the one place where they are commanded to - in the gatherings of His people.

1Co 1:13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

“Is Christ divided?” No; and since believers are His body, divisions are simply wrong.

The other two statements, about Paul being crucified, or being baptized in his name, show more of the seriousness of divisions. They give the impression believers are following a mere man, not the Savior.

Whether it is New Calvinism... Or King James Only... Or baptismal regeneration... Or speaking in tongues as evidence of salvation... Or Sabbath keeping... Or some other such thing.

The adherents who contend with you are in fact minimizing the Cross of Jesus Christ. They are keeping nonbelievers from their Savior.

Paul had some additional things he wanted to say to them about water baptism. It was something they were confused about. Later in the letter he talks more about it, dealing with the idea of baptism for the dead. For now, he drops the truth that water baptism is expected, but not essential, for salvation.

1Co 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,
1Co 1:15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

1Co 1:16 Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

This puts to rest, once and for all, any argument that a believer must be baptized in order to be truly saved. No matter how you try to twist Paul's Spirit-inspired words, he was saying that baptism does not save, and is not a necessary component of salvation. If it was, then salvation would no longer be by grace alone through faith alone.

Why get baptized? Jesus said to. If you are a believer, and want to follow Jesus, you do what He says. When you get water baptized, you give an outward physical representation of the inward spiritual transformation that Jesus has wrought in you:

- Jesus died, was in the grave, then rose from the dead.

- We identify with Him in His death by going under the water, then declare our new life in Him, and the power of His resurrection, as we emerge from the water.

If you're still not sure water baptism isn't part of the formula for getting saved, read on.

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...

On one level, it was just smart pastoring to not perform many baptisms. It kept folks from boasting.

Pam and I were baptized in the pool at Calvary Chapel's Twin Peaks Conference Center. It was pretty cold. We assumed that the senior pastor would do it, but we ended up dunked by the assistant. It didn't matter; it doesn't matter.

Any believer can perform a baptism. The only credential necessary is that both the baptizer and the baptizee be born-again.

Don't go somewhere and get baptized or re-baptized by someone famous. It's just weird.

The only re-baptism you might seek is if you were water baptized sometime in your life before you were a believer. It should *follow* getting saved - not precede it.

Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months. Does anybody think that he had only one evangelistic sermon and never taught anything else? That would be absurd. In the Book of Acts we're told that Paul, "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (18:4).

After getting booted out of the synagogue we read, "he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (18:11).

Paul reasoned and taught but always kept the Cross of Jesus central to his messages. The Gospel, i.e., the death and resurrection of Jesus, was present in every talk.

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

This last phrase, about wisdom, introduces the remaining verses of the chapter. We'll look at it with them next time.

During a synchronized swimming routine, the judges don't get to see everything. Each judge bases his or her score on what they see above the surface from where they are sitting.

They don't see what's going on below the surface - only its results above. Out of synch below will affect what is seen above.

The world looks upon the church and they see what is visible. If we have contentions internally, it will result in divisions, and when sinners see that, **they don't see the Cross.**

There's a famous saying that nicely summarizes all this for us. It is always attributed to Augustine, but its true origin is much later - 17th century - by a minister named Rupertus Meldenius.

*In essentials unity;
In non-essentials liberty;
In all things charity.*