

**Know the Word**  
**(1 Cor 1-3)**

10 July 2011

**TOPIC: CHURCH DIVISIONS**

**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

12 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."

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

14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, 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 words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

**A WHAT WAS CAUSING THE DIVISIONS?**

1. The word, "division" means to "**rip**" or "**tear**" (v. 10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.).
2. The Christians in this church were tearing the church apart – they were allowing the spirit of offense to rip out the heart and the life changing power of the church.
3. We need to be united in Christ not divided in Christ! The church was formed by Christ to serve one another and not to focus on ourselves. The church is not about me but about the message of Jesus and about service to the Kingdom of God! Let us examine what was happening to this New Testament Church and try to avoid the same kind of problems that they were facing.

**B. THE STYLE OF PREACHING (THE PREACHER)**

**1. I FOLLOW PAUL**

This group may have taken the attitude that Paul started this church and he will always be the leader. They always live in the past and never want to move on into the future: They like saying leave everything the way it was this is what the Lord wants!

**2. I FOLLOW APOLLOS**

These people may have put great emphasis on the knowledge of Scripture. Apollos was mighty in his use of the Word (Acts 18:24, 25).

**3. I FOLLOW PETER**

These people may have put great emphasis on the church and were taking the attitude that Peter had been given the keys to the kingdom, instituted the church on Pentecost, and they would follow him.

#### 4. I FOLLOW CHRIST

These people may have been saying, “We don’t need anyone or anything but Jesus.”

This group was the spiritual elite who said “We only do things Jesus’ way and the rest of these idol worshippers need to repent!

- Division and dissension never comes from the Spirit of God but from the spirit of offense rooted in the “Bait of Satan” who wants to divide and conquer.

##### **1 Corinthians 3:10-17**

10 By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds.

11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw,

13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work.

14 If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

15 If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

16 Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?

17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

- Paul lets his readers know that all workers in the church will be rewarded for their labors. However, all workers will not be rewarded at the same level. This is so because all workers do not produce the same quality of work.
- There are some workers who produce a superior quality of work that may be pictured as gold, silver or precious stones. There are others who produce an inferior quality of work that may be pictured as wood, hay and straw.
- Paul wanted these Corinthians to know that there will be many things done in the name of God that will not stand in the day of judgment. There are many things that will be done in the name of God that are inferior in quality based on God’s standards.
- “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and {that} the Spirit of God dwells in you? [17] If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”  
Here in verses 16 and 17, Paul was trying to raise the level of understanding of the church in the minds of the Corinthians. Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that the church is the temple of God. in verse sixteen because the Corinthians had not perceived who they are and their relationship with God. Paul asked, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and {that} the Spirit of God dwells in you?”
- Every Christian is a temple of God (6:19). Therefore, every church is a temple of God. Paul was warning the Corinthians against defiling the temple of God with inferior materials. The temple of God is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Those who destroy the temple of God will be destroyed by God. This is a further statement concerning the lack of rewards for workers who produce inferior works.
- This means that members of a church must be very careful how they bring about division in the church. God will not allow them to go unpunished. The church belongs to God and any divisions people bring into the church is an act against God.

**1 Corinthians 3:18-20**

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “{He is} the one who catches the wise in their craftiness”;

20 and again, “The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless.””

- The word “deceived” (*exapatao*) means to beguile. It speaks of self-deception. It suggests leading astray. Paul was telling the Corinthians not to lead themselves astray by an improper evaluation of self.
- Paul challenged his readers to become foolish. He challenged them to recognize the fact that human wisdom is foolishness without God.
- When church members live by their human wisdom rather than the wisdom of God, there will always be divisions in the church.
- Human wisdom can never replace the wisdom of God because the wisdom of God is spiritual truth. It is truth that can only be understood by the help of the Holy Spirit. This makes human wisdom useless. It does not have any way of discovering and understanding divine things.

**1 Corinthians 3:21-22**

21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,

22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you...”

- The members of the Corinthian church were glorying in men. They were comparing men and as a result, the church was being divided.
- Paul had spoken against church members having special loyalties to him, Apollos and Peter. These men were important in the life of the church but they were not to be worshiped.
- The divisions that were developed around Paul, Apollos and Peter were due to the spiritual immaturity of the church members. Because of the spiritual immaturity of the Corinthians, they began to boast of Paul, Peter or Apollos. The church members were giving honor to one over the other. This caused the church to become divided.

Paul even said that we possess the things in the present and the things in the future. It does not matter what it is we experience in life, those things belong to us. God causes them to work for our good and his glory. This includes the good and the bad, the pleasant and the unpleasant, the joys and the sorrows. God has made us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 3:23**

23 And you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.

- The final thing Paul mentions in this passage that is a cure for divisions in the church is a proper view of Christ. This is the most important of all cures for divisions in the church.
- Jesus Christ is the source of unity and the healer of divisions in the church. Paul wanted his readers to know that all Christians are the property and possession of Jesus Christ.

## Discussion Question

**Do you think Cor 3:10-17 applies only to Christian teachers or to every Christian? Do all, or only some, have responsibilities for building the church? How is it relevant to the way you spend your time and energy?**

### **Corinthians 3:10-17 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, <sup>13</sup> their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. <sup>14</sup> If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

<sup>16</sup> Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

### **Points to ponder:**

- Highlight and stress the meaning of 'foundation'... what does Paul mean by "gold, silver, and costly stones" as contrasting it with "wood, hay and straw" ?
- All of us, as believers, are jointly responsible in building the Lord's kingdom – talk about the different roles we play in building.

Paul has to say in 3:10 "*But each one should be careful how he builds.*"

- The devil loves to see us waste our lives away, in careless living, worldly pursuits, or be indifferent to God's concerns.
- We have to be discerning and be wiser. Invest our life in God's work.

The choice is ours.

- At the end of the day, if we choose to continue our careless living, we'll reap what we sow.
- Paul says there will be generally two groups of believers before the judgment seat of Christ – those who will receive a reward for faithfulness, and others who will "suffer loss" and see their "works" destroyed by fire.

He uses a strikingly contrasting picture to describe these two groups.

- One is those who build on the foundation gold, silver and costly stones, and the other, building on the same foundation, but with wood, hay and straw.
- Both of them are building on the same foundation, and therefore are safe as far as eternity is concerned.
- But the structure, that which they build upon the foundation, will be subjected to the testing fires before Christ.
- There is a day of reckoning coming when our motives will be judged, when our works will be weighed in the light of, not what we have accomplished but what we might have accomplished.

Good to link it to the parable of talents (Matt 25:14-18)

- The servant with one talent who gained only one more will be rewarded, while the one who dug a hole in the ground and hid that talent will suffer loss.
- In the parable, the servants were given different number of talents according to their ability. God is not interested in quantity as much as He is interested in quality. It is faithfulness which will be rewarded, the fruit that remains.