

1 Corinthians: The Body of Christ vs. A Body in Crisis

New Pilgrim Baptist Church Bible Study

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- I. Unity over Leadership (1 Cor 1-4)
 - A. The Call to Unity in Christ (1 Cor 1:1-17)
1. Paul's Greeting to the Church (1:1-3)
 - a. Paul was "called" (kletos).
 - b. Paul was chosen as an "apostle" (apostello) sent to the church.
 - c. Done by the "will of God."
 - d. This letter written around the 40s AD was written to the "church" (ekkllesia).
 - e. They are called "sanctified" (hagiazo) and called "saints."
 - f. They are joined together with everyone who also calls on the name of Jesus, part of the church universal. We are all bound together in Jesus Christ, even when we don't recognize it.
2. Paul's Cause for Thanksgiving for the Church (1:4-9)
 - a. Paul approaches the church based on his ability given to him through grace. It takes grace to do the job of preaching and teaching the gospel.
 - b. The grace of God enriches the church. The church is wealthy in the Spirit. It takes obedience and discipline to make deposits from the wealth of God.
 - c. The church is "secured" until the end in the sense that it is certain that one day the Lord Jesus will come for her. We wait patiently in unity for the Lord who is above all to come and shine his face upon us. This is why we must continue our work.
 - d. And God is "faithful" (pistos) to fulfill his promises. He has called us to the "fellowship" (koinonia) of his Son. We are only in church because he called us to be here.
3. Paul's Plea for Unity in the Church (1:10-16)
 - a. Paul beckons the church to change its ways and not be divided on political lines. Some sided with Paul the founder. Some sided with Peter, the original disciple of Jesus. Others sided with Apollos the rhetorically gifted friend of Paul. None of these could replace Jesus Christ who is the true head of the church.
 - b. Christ is indivisible. This is the theme of the whole letter. We cannot cut up Jesus and expect that we have Jesus. To have Jesus, is to have to whole Christ. Otherwise, we are deceiving ourselves. Paul pleaded that they not be part of "schisms," internal groups, special interest clubs, cliques, people who find their purpose in church in anything other than Jesus Christ. But they must have the same "mind" and "knowledge." Members of the church were never supposed to be independent of each other but interdependent. The church is to be a network, intertwined in completion.
 - c. Paul wanted to be clear that he had not baptized everyone so the claims could not be made that he was placing his name on them. He was not a traveling philosopher just trying to get students for his own purposes, but wedding people to Jesus.
4. The Purpose of the Cross and the Church (1:17)
 - a. Paul's goal was not to simply put people in water. The ritual alone would not save. It was the faith in Christ, and its concomitant faithful walk, that brought people into the fellowship of God.
 - b. Promoting anything else, any arrogant or prideful perspective, would empty the cross of its power. The cross is the central symbol that provides the means of salvation.