

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.”

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One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism – Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians

*Part 3 Pride – the Quencher the
Spirit’s Unity*

February 18, 2024

Sermon Text: 1 Cor 1:10-17

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 1:18-31

I believe in God, the Father
Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ,
His only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy
Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was
buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose from the
dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God
the Father Almighty;

from there he shall come again to
judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

.....

1Co 1:4-9 I thank my God always

concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, (5) that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, (6) even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, (7) so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (8) who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

But due to false teachers among them, and also due to the arrogant Greek culture they lived in and had once been a part of, *they were seeking MORE. More wisdom. More knowledge More oratory ability to impress others.*

The Greeks were much like the academia of our day:

Act 17:21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

By way of review, let's recall the main points of these verses. Paul reminds the Corinthians – a church filled with pride and a worldly mindset – that in Christ they were:

- Enriched in all speech and knowledge
- They were not lacking in any gift
- They could now look forward eagerly to the Day of the Lord when they would be found blameless

Arrogance, you see. Always looking for more, for some new idea which would enable them to be praised by their fellow intellectuals. As they proceeded down this path, Paul and his gospel would become too simple, too unsophisticated, too foolish to obtain the praise of the world.

This foolish pride is what produced in them these various parties, each one insisting they had superior knowledge. This arrogance had to be shown what it really was –

foolishness. That is the fundamental reason Paul is writing this letter. Even more than being divided and quarreling, *they were also being alienated from Paul and thus from the gospel.* He admonishes them:

1Co 1:10-17 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

(11) For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.

(12) Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ."

(13) Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? 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 would say you were baptized in my name. (16) Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

(17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

Division in the church. Division and quarreling among the members of the church. This is something that, sadly, Christians are all too familiar with. When we see division like this, one of two things is happening:

1. Counterfeit Christians are being revealed. People who claim to be Christians but aren't. People who hold to a false gospel. This is the 1 John 2:18 scenario and it is necessary that it happen.

But then...

2. Division among true Christians because arrogance and a worldly mindset has crept in.

This second cause of division and quarreling is what was happening at Corinth. All through this epistle Paul will be dealing with problems that were due to this terrible sin of pride. There was: [See Gordon Fee, First Corinthians] -

1. Quarreling and divisiveness evidencing itself in groups rallying around various teachers. “However there is not the slightest hint that the teachers named were themselves party to this quarreling.”
2. This quarreling is being energized in the name of “wisdom.” Chapters 1-3 will deal with the “wisdom of the natural man” at length.
3. Paul will speak of “boasting” and being “puffed up” as the cause of this sorry state of affairs.

How did this happen? How *does* this happen in a church? It comes when Christians allow their thinking *to be conformed to the world’s thinking*.

“It seems the problem stemmed from Hellenistic influences. In the Greek world there were itinerant philosophers, many of whom were sophists [Fee]. We speak of “sophism” to describe fallacious and specious speech which intends to deceive). In the Corinthians’ world, sophists were paid teachers who traveled around teaching “wisdom” and “rhetoric” (oratory). They were very concerned with “polished oratory” than content. You see this coming out in Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians –

1Co 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

2Co 10:10 For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech

contemptible."

Just as people in the world chose their leaders is their preferred school of philosophy and oratory, so now the Corinthian believers were being conformed to their world. *And it was all fueled by the sin of pride.* They considered themselves wise and Paul is going to show them that by thinking this way, they were necessarily rejecting God's wisdom and thus the gospel.

"Paul's basic concern is not the division itself but the greater issue of the threat posed to the gospel, and along with that to the very nature of the church and its ministry. Their quarrels were serious enough, but the root cause was a false doctrine which had exchanged the theology of the cross for a false triumphalism that excluded the cross." [Fee]

Where should we begin by way of application for today? Division and quarreling among Christians. Factions in the church. The remedy is not *uniformity*. A sameness in all

opinion and practice. No. We are always going to have different conclusions and opinions about doctrine and practice within the sphere of the true church. As long as we are in this present world, these differences are going to exist. But there is *unity of the Spirit* which is based upon agreement about the fundamental and non-negotiable elements of the gospel. This unity we must be diligent to preserve. We must not elevate opinion on other matters – even if they are also important – to the level of *essentials*. But this certainly will happen if we become arrogant.

And it does happen, sadly.

Isn't it interesting that in these opening words to this divided church, Paul raises the issue of *baptism* to them as something they were also divided over:

1Co 1:13-17 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? 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 would say you were baptized in my name. (16) Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. (17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

We will look more closely at these verses as we proceed, but for now let this point sink in. In the church today and in centuries gone by, there have been Presbyterians and Lutherans and Baptists. Each group holds a different view about the nuances of baptism. This in itself is not sinful. It is simply a reflection of the fact that we have not yet arrived at full knowledge – and we never will in this present life. I wonder, did these groups at Corinth stamp their own school of baptism with the name of their chosen leader? Apollos' baptism. Peter's baptism. Paul's baptism. And then the purists – Christ's baptism??? Of course there was only one baptism:

Eph 4:4-5 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

And we see many other verses which tell us the same thing. Here are just three -

1Co 1:10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Rom 15:5-6 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, (6) so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Php 1:27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will

hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Let's think very carefully about this. There is ONE Lord Jesus Christ. ONE faith, ONE gospel. ONE baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. ONE true church, the body of Christ. Every real Christian confesses these things. We saw it right at the very beginning here:

1Co 1:2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

With all who in every place. There it is. I am one with any Presbyterian or Lutheran or Baptist who is born again and thus in Christ. Furthermore, *I should be able to function in unity with such people in spite of our differences in disputable matters.* Why then do we see so many individual local

churches in even small communities like ours? There are two reasons.

1. Many are not true churches because they preach a false gospel and thus fill their pews with unconverted people. The unity of the Spirit is unity *of the Spirit*. We cannot join in some external organization with people who are not really Christians.
2. But division also exists for the reasons the Corinthians were divided – pride and arrogance, thinking like the world thinks. “Our position on Israel is the only true position.” My doctrine of end-times is the only correct position and I will not associate with anyone who differs. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregational – my form of church government is right and I will not fellowship with those who differ. And on and on and on it goes.

Now, let's do something which is a very helpful device to reveal error.

Let's take some of these positions to their logical conclusion. Consider this church. Our local church here. We are few in number. In a large, highly populated place a local church can still have a sizeable congregation even if they are quite narrow in doctrines on secondary, debatable issues. But what happens here? What happens if we were to require for membership:

1. Agreement on mode of baptism
2. Agreement on end-time doctrines (millennium, etc)
3. Agreement on style of music in worship (Psalms only, hymns only, etc)
4. Agreement on what translation of the Bible to use

There are people, professing Christians, who do nothing but hop around from church to church because they cannot stay in a place where some secondary doctrine does not agree with theirs.

A local pastor phoned me once to find out what our church doctrine was. He didn't ask me about the

deity of Christ or justification or resurrection. He asked me "are you complementarian?" In other words, he was going to use our position on submission in marriage as a test to see if we were people he could fellowship with. If we were a true church.

When my first book was published I went to a conference back east where the publisher was displaying it. The conference was held at a very conservative (legalistic) college and one of the professors there greeted me and was asking about my book (which was on domestic abusers hiding in the church). The moment I told him that in my book I took the position that divorce was permissible for abuse, he couldn't get away from me fast enough. My book was never mentioned for the rest of the conference.

Another pastor I knew had a reputation of not being very receptive to fellowship with other pastors who held a different view of eschatology than he did.

Have you ever encountered a

professing Christian who is a KJV Bible only man? Often, not always, if such a person sees you using a different version they will not want you to be in their church.

What is at the root of all of this division? I can tell you because God's Word tells us – *the terrible sin of pride and arrogance*. The same sin which had infected the Corinthians.

“Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.”

“I was baptized in Paul's baptism.”
“I was baptized in Apollos' baptism.”

This sinfulness, and that is what it is, leads to even more serious sins:

- It is a denial of the real nature of Christ's church.
- It is a denial of the gospel and a distortion of who the Lord Jesus Christ is and how He saves us.

And it does something else. It turns our focus from the truly important things and opens the doors for the devil to attack us even more. For example:

1Co 5:1-2 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. (2) You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

See it? Evil was in the church and it was not only being permitted, they were boasting about it! *The truly important things are ignored and issues that are not essential to the gospel become the things that divide and battles are fought over!* Instead of fighting for the gospel and thus for the defense of the true church, Satan is given a wide open door to attack while we who are to be soldiers of the Lord fight with one another.

George Whitefield, as had the

Apostle Paul, Luther, Calvin and all true Christians, had to deal with sad divisions which the devil was always anxious to create among Christ's true people. In a letter written in 1747 from New York and while he was quite ill, Whitefield wrote to a young preacher:

“My dear man, you will excuse me as my heart at present is affected with thoughts of the divisions that exist between the servants and churches of Jesus Christ. May Jesus heal them, and hasten that blessed time when we shall all see eye to eye, and there shall be no disputings about buildings, doctrine, or discipline in all of God's holy mountain. If my present sickness ends in death, we shall converse in a better world, and without the least discord or contention. Yours in the glorious Emmanuel, George Whitefield.”
[George Whitefield biography, Arnold Dallimore, Banner of Truth]

There is the Spirit of unity in the bond of peace which the Lord Jesus died for us to enjoy in His church.

As we continue through this letter to a church embroiled in arrogant division, may the Lord lead us into greater and greater unity so that we will be a shining lamp to a world perishing in darkness.