

CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS**1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

INTRO: You may have hear the story about the man who is rescued after many years on a desert island. As he stands on the deck of the rescuing vessel, the captain says to him, “I thought you were stranded alone. How come I can see three huts on the beach?”

“Well,” replies the castaway, “that one there is my house and that one there is where I go to church.”

“And the third one?” asks the skipper.

“Oh, that’s my old church.”

Brickerville, PA is a tiny crossroad at the intersection of Route 501 north and south and Route 322 running east and west. This little hamlet had two Lutheran Churches when we lived near there back in the 80s and 90s. They were both of the same synod and they were quite literally within sight of each other – which is saying something in the Pennsylvania foothills. It turns out that in the late 1800s there had been a disagreement over a long forgotten issue – and so the churches worshipped just a few tenths of a mile apart for over one hundred years until they were finally brought under one roof by my friend Bill – a Lutheran pastor with the gift of grace.

Of course the BIC would never think of splitting would they? Well, we did. Back in the 1850s a group of River Brethren, as we were called then, became convinced they no longer liked worshipping in barns and decided to build a (GASP!!!!) church building!! The leadership thought otherwise and the only real split the BIC ever experienced occurred and the offending group built their building and became a small denomination named United Zion’s Children. The River Brethren officially became the Brethren in Christ in 1862 and were all building church buildings by the 1870s and 1880s. A split occurred over something that was ironed out less than two decades later.

Paul was frustrated by factions and that was one of the reasons he was writing to the church in Corinth. Our text last week covered his greeting to the group, and he commended them for being the Called Out Ones in Corinth, made holy by God in an unholy place. But he had a concern and he gets right down to business with it in the first four chapters of his letter. Our text for this morning is the opening of that confrontation. Listen, **(Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17)**

The point Paul is making is that the children of God are Christ’s Followers and they are one as he is one. The problem is, the very Christ Followers who were supposed to be united for the Good News and against sin, were choosing sides and weakening the mission of the Good News. On top of that, they were actually using his name as one of the sides they were taking. This would not do, and it cannot do.

We need to be united Church! And while we might be the picture of unity here at ABC, there is too much disunity in the Body of Christ for us to rest on our laurels. Let’s learn from this text how we can be Followers of Christ rather than factions that make Satan laugh with delight.

Paul begins in verse 10 with . . .

An Urgent Appeal

- Peterson begins his paraphrase of this verse with. “*I have a serious concern to bring up with you, my friends . . .*” (v. 10 The Message). The NIV begins this way, *I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, (v. 10). The name of Jesus is being besmirched and so Paul comes to the Corinthians in that very name. This is a big issue and it still is. This issue resonates with us in 2020 as it did in 52 AD because it’s still so true – there are factions and factions don’t belong in the church united. Barclay puts it in more picturesque language when he describes it as . . .

Outbreaks of Strife Amongst You

- Here is the church that bears the name of the one who is described as the Prince of Peace and there is strife instead. And rather than adding to the strife, Paul goes at it in peacemaker fashion by intentionally referring to the Corinthians as brothers and sisters. He’s being stern as he confronts them, but he softens it by referring to them as his siblings in Christ rather than coming down on them like a tough disciplinarian. And at the same time, by referring to them as siblings, he can also appeal to the unity that implies rather than the divisions that are causing their quarrels. In Barclay’s words “*They were brothers and they should have lived in brotherly love.*”

- Instead of strife, he tells them they should be “*united in mind and thought.*” The word he uses for “united” is a medical word used to describe knitting together of bones that have been fractured or joining together a joint that has been dislocated. Barclay points out “*The disunion is unnatural and must be cured for the sake of the health and efficiency of the body of the Church.*” Such disunity is dislocated in the body of Christ. (Falling on the ice in November of 2018, I remember thinking, “My leg should not be able to bend that way!” It should not have, because it was not supposed to and when it did, my leg broke.)
- As you heard in the reading of the text, there were four parties or divisions IN the church. And he uses a word to describe them that is a word picture of what happens when a garment is torn to pieces. (Tell about Karl Neumann’s rain gear – in tatters) Paul is likening the Corinthian Church in the same way.
- And what really frosts Paul is that he is being used as the figurehead of one of those tatters. Listen, *One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.”*, (v 12). And let’s also notice that the other two, Cephas and Apollos, and certainly not Jesus, had anything to do with the factions. They were all contrived by the adherents.
- Let’s take a quick look at the groups:
 - The Paul Party was probably a Gentile group. Paul had always preached the gospel of Christian freedom and the end of the law, but they had forgotten that they were saved, not to be free to sin, but to be free not to sin.
 - Apollos was gifted preacher that we are introduced to in Acts 8. It seems he would appeal to the intellectuals in Corinth.
 - Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter and this party was likely the Jewish Christian contingent in Corinth, and they no doubt wanted to stay
 - And then there was the group that you often have who can pull the Christ card out of their back pocket in the twinkling of an eye.
- This is who Paul is dealing with. And he makes a crucial point when he essentially says . . .

Picking sides doesn’t work when you’re already on the same side

- In his words he asks, “*Is Christ divided?*” (v. 13). And the answer is NO! Christ cannot be divided by following men. One commentator said “*The point is that if the Corinthians will think more deeply about their faith they will see how absurd it is to think of any man as a foundation.*” That is why any man or woman of God down through history would be extremely frustrated to see how their followers have misconstrued their teachings into divisions. Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and many others merely wanted to clarify the word of God and live by it and help others live by it. They did not intend to create movements. So many denominations have come about because someone started a church which is a protest against all denominations but in the end what they end up with is yet another denomination. The truth is the Church is CHRIST’s Church and the Church is one because Christ is one.
- Paul points out that he only wants to preach the Gospel. The gospel is, by definition, Good News and . . .

The Good News Isn’t Good News When You are Arguing Over It

- The Cross of Christ can’t be trivialized into the mere words of a human being. Jesus didn’t die to defeat sin just to have someone argue over who had the best preacher baptize him. Such triviality punctures the power of the Good News and that’s what constitutes the pollution of factions. It’s like this, factions in the body of Christ threaten the Good News, because what is so good about the good news if it’s divided?
- So Paul tells the Corinthians here and in the following several chapters that they need to be the same. The Good News is not divided. Christ is not divided. God’s Called Out Ones are not to be divided. They must be the same:
 - They must say the same thing
 - They must have the same mind
 - They must have the same opinion.
- If anyone thinks this will be boring they are very mistaken. As Christ’s Followers we are in his image, but we are unique and how we proclaim the Good News, and how we ponder the Good News, and how we believe the Good News is just as unique as we are. But, we are united in the fact that the Good News of Christ crucified, buried, risen, ascended, and coming again for all who call him Lord is the same. That is

the Good News. And that is why factions are not an option for those who call themselves Christ's Followers. Amen.