

“The Foundation of Church Success”

Message 2 “Unity”

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Jerry Grey WBC 3-23

Introduction: We have noted that the church in Corinth had many problems. Paul had his work cut out for him. The church was so bad, that the city had a “byword” or “country saying” to describe people who lived in Corinth. The byword was, “to Corinthianize.” This referred to sexual immorality.

The society had infiltrated the church with selfishness, ego problems, and sin that God prohibited. The church was filled with divisions and fighting. Listen to James:

James 4:1-3 (Corinth)

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

NIV

Quote: Unknown origin- “Quarrelling is a reality in the church because selfishness and other sins are realities in the church. Because of quarreling, the father is dishonored, the Son is disgraced, his people are demoralized and discredited, and the world is turned off and confirmed in unbelief. Fractured relationships rob Christians of joy and effectiveness, robs God of glory, and robs the world of the true testimony of the gospel. A high price for an ego trip!”

To our shame, churches have actually come to blows in church conferences where pastors and staffs have been physically harmed, their children persecuted for no reason, friends separated, families divided, churches split, men of God discredited, and the kingdom left in disarray.

If we believe James, it comes from our own desires (passions, ESV). Of all the problems that the church in Corinth had, Paul chose to address this problem first- **Divisions** and **quarrelling**. *These two are the Devil's favorite tools.*

I have come to see and believe that the foundation of church success is **unity** in the body. That's why I protect it at all cost. I have no problem telling trouble makers to find another home.

If the pastors would deal with problem people properly, we could weed them out. When problem people leave the church and go somewhere else leaders should call the next church and inform them of the issues they left behind. Lay people need to do the same. This is why we used to do church letters.

Quarrels, disunity, and divisions kill the productivity of a church. All the energy goes into tending a disobedient flock that's hurt, confused, and bewildered. What does Jesus say about it?

Parts of The Priestly Prayer

John 17:11-12

11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — **so that they may be one as we are one.**

NIV

John 17:20-23

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be **one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be **one** as we are **one**: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

NIV

I take these passages to mean that if unity was important to Jesus it should be important to us. Without it- The world will not believe.

Quote: JRG. *"The next time you find yourself on a soap box, ask yourself this... Is it worth the salvation of others."*

If getting our way and satisfying our own passions ever becomes more important than souls- we are done.

Unity is the foundation of the success of the NT church.

Paul's Personal Plea- Verse 10: **Parakaleo**

Greek: Plea, appeal, beseech, entreat, encourage, to agree, or call to one's side. Please!

This means something to Paul. This is important. The preacher should always be confident in his message. Always come to the table of deliverance with passion and confidence in the Word. Paul knew that the church needed the message.

The translation could literally be please, “**listen to me, I am begging you to obey this word.**” Parakaleo is a cognate of the word *comforter*, from which we get the word Holy Spirit. This is the same word used in Rom 12:1- “I beseech.”

This was so important to Paul that he asked, or pleaded with them through, or in, the Name of Jesus. This is an instrumental preposition. This refers to how Paul made his petition.

Paul calls them to his side and begs them in Jesus name, and for His sake, to agree with each other. **λεγω** means to speak the same thing. The NIV says agree with one another. The HCSB says, that we are all to agree in what we say. The KJV says that we are to speak the same thing. The ESV says we all are to agree. Do you think that Paul forgot we are Baptist and don't all ever agree on anything.

The word is used of two warring faction that actually come together for reconciliation. The word refers to harmony. Wow! That would be a breath of fresh air.

The translation is that we do this through, or in (**δία**) the name of Jesus. So that (**hina**) there will be no **schisma** (divisions) among us. That's pretty clear.

A **schisma** is a split, or division. The word pictures destruction of unity through force, e.g. the tearing of a garment or political factions that are engaged in a struggle for power. Social stratifications.

The opposite of this is that we would all agree so that we may have unity with the same understanding, with the same conviction.

Unity: *κατηρτισμενοι*— Perfect- passive- participle. This is perfect and continual unity that comes from God. This indicates that God put things in order. God restored things to the former condition or put it in a proper condition. This may take place with a life, a marriage, or a church.

Nothing or no one can accomplish this without Jesus and the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is God's grace in the most vivid way. This is an enormous spiritual truth. This reveals the power of unity in the life of individuals and the church. This cannot be accomplished in any other area of society like it is accomplished in the church. Supposedly.

The last word is *judgment* or *opinion*. The HCSB says conviction. Paul says we are to be of the same mind in conviction. The Greek word is **gnome**- judgment, mind, opinion, advice, purpose, and will. This produces unity.

Submission to Christ can bring perfected unity in the mind and judgment of God's people. This is to happen so that the mind, opinions, and judgments are one. This is the theme of this book.

Well. Bro Jerry, You just don't understand my point or my problem. Well, I think I do. Let me give you an example from the scriptures so you can give your lame excuse to Jesus.

Phil 4:2-3

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

NIV

Why were these ladies arguing about? We don't know. Why did Paul not tell us what the argument was about? Cause we would take sides and the argument would still be going on. Who was right and wrong was not important. Your argument isn't important either. Paul wasn't into gossip. If we knew what they disagreed about, we would start choosing sides ourselves. 2200 years after the fact we would be trying to decide who was right.

Phil 2:1-11

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death —
even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

NIV

Even Paul and Barnabas fell prey to this type of sin.

Acts 13:4-5

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John (Mark) was with them as their helper.

NIV

Acts 13:13-14

13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John (Mark) left them to return to Jerusalem.

NIV

Acts 15:36-41

36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." 37 *Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.*

39 They had such a **sharp disagreement** that they parted company. Barnabas took **Mark** and sailed for Cyprus, 40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. 41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

NIV

2 Tim 4:9-18

9 Do your best to come to me quickly, 10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. *Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.* 12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

16 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

NIV

Verse 11: Paul says that members from the household of Chloe had come and brought news of divisions. Paul uses the Greek word *επιδες* from *ερισ*. This refers to strifes or contentions- hot disputes. This would be the emotional flames that ignite when the divisions or *σχισμας* get out of control.

As your pastor, I understand that we are going to have times of division and quarrels, but it is my job to keep the fires small and controllable. There is a proper forum for dealing with

εἰς (**Contention, debate, strife, variance**) and it's not to be public or out of control. Always remember time, turf, and terms.

Quarrelers like to fight and if you take the opportunity away it is much easier to resolve problems. If you give Diotrephes and Alexander the metal worked a forum, they will make full use of it. The HCSB uses the word *rivalry*. That's not the best translation but it does give a different look to the problem. Many times divisions are ongoing so someone can win a battle or fight. The fight becomes more important than the issue. I'm not interested in fighting.

Illustration: One local church actually had a deacon stand up in the congregation and try to get a vote from the church to fire the pastor while he was away on vacation. I know this man and he is a good pastor. His wife was a member of Woodlake Baptist while he was in California trying to get a new church off the ground. They couldn't sell their house so he came home and took this church that's close by. Some of the destroyers came here and visited while all this was going on. I could see the vitriol and hatred in their faces as they sat in our church while I preached. They literally hated their pastor. One man who I talked to was literally shaking with hatred as he denigrated his pastor. I did not welcome them here. Don't want them cause in a few months that hatred would be directed at me. There's no way that man was saved. He was a poster child for Diotrephes. I called their pastor and told him all about them.

Verse 12: What was it in Corinth that was so important that it was splitting the church. The division was about who the people were going to follow.

- Paul- Represents missions
- Apollos- Represents discipleship. A great teacher and leader of the early church.
- Peter- The preacher. God used this man to preach the gospel message at Pentecost to bring the Spirit to Jerusalem, Judea, and the world. Upon this rock I will build my church.
- Jesus- Someone got really spiritual and actually brought Jesus up. *"I follow Jesus."* You can bet if someone says that, it's probably not true.

That's it? Yes that's it. The church was fighting over who their hero was going to be.

Spiritual, social, economic, and geographical influences all play a part in how people see the church. I've had people who have never taking a New Testament Church class tell me what the church is supposed to be and to do. People view the church differently by way of their spiritual gifts too.

- Some want more preaching, others want discipleship, still others think missions is all there is.
- Mercy people think the church is a soup kitchen and a benevolence market. Social ministry is most important.
- Prophets think we are to keep up with current events and the signs of the times. Eschatology is most important to them.
- Some people choose their church and try to guide their church according to the music they like and consider holy.
- Administration people think church organization and polity is king. We have to be Elder led or deacon led and have to ignore the Holy Spirit if the C & B L contradicts the bible.
- Service and hospitality people want more fellowships and programs in the church.
- Still others focus on doctrine and behavior.

If the people were really following Christ, there would have been no divisions. This is why God calls men to be pastors. A called leader to develop himself into a well-rounded, godly influencer. He is to shepherd the flock that helps his sheep see the big picture. A shepherd helps you see into the future and helps you submit to Jesus Christ and His Lordship. The pastor is a problem solver.

What is a church? The NT word is *Ekklesia*. The true meaning of the word is *assembly*. Many times a riot was called an *ekklesia*. The church is defined by many terms today and takes on many meanings that are not all necessarily wrong.

The “*church*” is described by my New Testament theology professor, Dr. David Skinner, *as a visible assembly of people who have been saved through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who have publicly declared their salvation by being immersed in water and who have joined together in obeying Christ’s Commission*” (Matthew 28: 19-20).

I am going to resist with all my heart the temptation to go any deeper into this definition. There are many who see or don’t see a universal church and have many ideas as to what the church is and what it should do. That would bog us down here so I will let that be for another day’s study.

For me, the definition of the church is quite like the definition of evangelism. I don’t care what your definition is... just do it. Do church; do evangelism.

Verse 13: This is a great question to ask those in the body that are divided. “Is Christ divided?”

Greek: **μερίζω**- to separate, divide, to apportion, to disunite, differ. How could Christ disagree with Himself?

Is it righteous for us to take the parts of Jesus we want and jettison the other parts? Jesus is not for distribution. Jesus doesn't belong to anyone. We do not own him.

Jesus likewise doesn't loan out His deity to anyone. Was Paul crucified for you? The word for crucify is **σταυρωω**, which means to impale on a pole. This is the passion and atonement of Christ. Was Paul your atonement? Could Paul give you holiness? Paul says no... give your life to Jesus Christ. Where you baptized into Paul's name? Let me make it applicable.

Illustration: I baptize a person and say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Bro Jerry, and the Holy Spirit." What would you say. If you try to divide Christ you are doing the same thing. If you divide His body, you divide the Christ. Your name does not carry the weight that His name carries.

Verse 14-16: Paul did not create a cult in his own name. This message should be preached and heard by all the little gods out there preaching a false gospel and starting cults. Many of our modern megachurches are just huge cults clocked in a woke gospel.

Paul said I didn't even baptize you all. Outside of a few people like Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas I only shared the message with you. Paul stayed in Corinth a good while but Paul started churches and moved on.

Paul did not start a cult to follow Paul. His message deflected attention and put Jesus first. Paul said he was unimportant. That would be a refreshing message to hear from Copland, Osteen and Stanley. It would be nice to see humility in these people who claim to be “little christs.”

1 Cor 4:9-13

9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

NIV

This would be refreshing to see some leaders who actually knew how insignificant they really are and to truly understand their position and what their job really is.

Acts 18:8

8 Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

NIV

Acts 18:18-22

18 Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and

Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken. 19 They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. 20 When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. 21 But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus. 22 When he landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church and then went down to Antioch.

NIV

The church doesn't revolve around a figure head other than Jesus Christ. So stop arguing and get on team Jesus.

Verse 17: Every preacher I know that is a true pulpiter wants to be able to do this. I wish all I had to do was prepare and preach. I want the freedom to grow the believers and lead the lost to Christ. I wish I could preach the Word in the power of the Spirit instead of changing diapers.

Greek:

- Apostello- to be sent.
- Euaggelizo- to declare, bring, to preach the good news.

Paul knew what the main thing was. Many preachers today have turned the ministry into anything but being sent to evangelize. The church people have also turned the pastoral ministry into a hospital ministry. The preacher's imperative is the gospel message. You may not like that but that's the Word. Paul says he didn't even baptize. ***His calling was to take the gospel message to the Gentiles and you better be glad he did.*** If the pastor visits he is called a great pastor today. If he neglects his pulpit no body cares. I

didn't say the pastor doesn't tend the flock. I said that he must keep the main thing the main thing.

Notice Paul was concerned that the cross could be emptied of its effect.

Empty- Kenoo from kenos. This is to empty. To make void, to make of no reputation to make of no effect. The preacher cannot water the message down, make it about himself, use it for profit, or for personal fame and recognition. This will make it lose its power and effect.

What a tragedy for the pastor to preach and the words of power are void of effect. Never put yourself in a position of competition with the message of the cross so that you can be seen, heard, or praised. It is simply not about the person. It's about the Savior.

The preacher is not here to intellectualize, philosophize, or pontificate. I am not here to gain a following. I am here to say that the power of the cross is still active and as powerful as it has ever been. The power of the cross can still save sinners of the worst sort. It still delivers from perversion. It can heal depression and psychological problems. It can heal addictions. The church and the message of the cross is worth pouring your passion into.

I know of nothing as difficult or as rewarding as kingdom building. If it were easy, anyone could do it. Nothing or no one gets the glory. God does not share His glory.

So no more divisions and quarreling over men. It's about the message of the cross, church unity.

Closing: A great example of unity. Don't you want to be a part of a church that is like this?

Acts 2:42-47

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

NIV