

I CORINTHIANS: HANDLING BELIEVERS' PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

II. Handling Divisions Among Believers, 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21

A. Discerning False Views Behind Church Politics

(1 Corinthians 1:10-12)

I. Introduction

- A. The people Paul disciplined in Corinth lived in a city that was famous for its immorality, alcoholism and worldly pursuits (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians: The City of Corinth," p. 1619), so the formidable influence of the city's culture on the Corinthian believers left Paul addressing "(a)berrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety" in his letters to them, *Ibid.*
- B. However, in a vision Paul received from God as he ministered at Corinth in Acts 18:10b NIV, God told him, "I have many people in this city," so Paul was to keep on ministering regardless of the trials he faced there.
- C. This epistle is thus timely for us who face our own decadent culture today, so we view 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 that reveals false views that cause errant political divisions among believers for our insight and application:

II. Discerning False Views Behind Church Politics, 1 Corinthians 1:10-12.

- A. When Paul began to address the problem of divisions among the believers at Corinth, he mentioned that the problem arose from false views and resulting false judgments that existed in his readers, 1 Corinthians 1:10:
 - 1. Paul strongly urged his readers by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that they all speak the same thing and that there not be divisions among them, 1 Corinthians 1:10a.
 - 2. To explain the cause for these divisions, Paul added that he desired that his readers "be made complete" (*katertismenoi*, perfect passive participle of *katartizo*, "be complete," The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 225; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 418-419) by having the same "mind, understanding" (*nous*, *Ibid.*, p. 546-547) and "judgment" (*gnome*, *Ibid.*, p. 162), 1 Corinthians 1:10b.
 - 3. Obviously, then, a difference in mind and understanding in different parties had produced different judgments among them, what had in turn produced divisions in the Church.
- B. Paul then noted that the household of Chloe at Corinth had reported to him that there was actual strife in the form of quarrels (*eris*, *Ibid.*, p. 309) among these factions in the Church at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 1:11.
- C. To explain, Paul referred to errant church political statements being made by parties such as "I am of Paul," and "I am of Apollos," and "I am of Cephas" [Aramaic for "Peter"] and "I am of Christ," 1 Corinthians 1:12.
- D. The text reveals that errant personal pride and the false exaltation of mortal men had produced this problem:
 - 1. In the Greek text, the personal pronoun *ego* rendered "I" appears in the nominative case with each "I am . . ." claim, so the persons to which these pronouns refer are emphasized. (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 579; J. Gresham Machan, N. T. Grk. for Beginners, 1966, p. 48-49) These claims thus exhibited personal pride.
 - 2. Also, the claims themselves exposed an errant exaltation of mortal men, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, fn. to 1 Cor. 1:12:
 - a. Those who claimed they followed Paul likely did so out of allegiance to him as their spiritual father since he had first brought them the Gospel, cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15. We might call them the "Precedence Party."
 - b. Those who claimed they followed Apollos likely preferred his well-known polished oratory in delivering his preaching and teaching messages, cf. Acts 18:24. We might call them the "Preaching Party."
 - c. Those who claimed they followed Cephas [Aramaic for Peter] appreciated that he had walked with Christ during His earthly ministry, that he was one of the inner three disciples (Peter, James, and John) who had witnessed Christ's glorious transfiguration on the Mount of Transfiguration with His appearing there with Israel's great prophets Moses and Elijah, Matthew 17:1-3. We might call them the "Traditionalist Party."
 - d. Those who claimed they followed Christ "included those who disdained attachment to any group and flaunted their liberty in Christ," 1 Corinthians 6:12; *Ibid.* We might call them the "Liberated Party."
 - e. However, each of these views failed the test of Biblical truth and true spirituality (as follows):
 - i. Paul, Apollos, and Peter were sinners who had been graciously justified and given spiritual gifts to minister by God (1 Cor. 3:5-9), so only God was to be praised for what was valuable in each man!
 - ii. Christ is the Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22-23), so only He stood to be glorified by the believers at Corinth for His All-Sufficiency as their Head and not just for the spiritual liberty that He provided!

Lesson: *The Corinthian believers held to errant views about themselves, about God and about God's servants, what had led to unedifying political divisions in the Church.*

Application: *May we watch that our views about ourselves, God's servants and God are Biblical to avoid divisions.*