

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part III: Avoiding Mortal Human Personality Divisions To Follow Christ

(1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

I. Introduction

- A. Functioning by means of the sin nature, what we term "carnality," is an ongoing challenge in today's churches.
- B. Paul's 1 Corinthians epistle was directed to carnal believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3), and 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 revealed God's directive that carnal believers avoid human personality divisions and instead follow Christ:

II. Avoiding Mortal Human Personality Divisions To Follow Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.

- A. Paul told his Corinthian readers to agree with one another that there be no divisions among them, 1 Cor. 1:10.
- B. This directive resulted from a report Paul had received from people in Chloe's household that there had been quarrels among Paul's readers (1 Cor. 1:11) over what human personalities they were choosing to follow:
 - 1. Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 1:12-13 may indicate that Paul's readers were divided over whether they should follow Paul, Apollos, Peter or Christ, but 1 Corinthians 4:6 may indicate Paul was transferring the arguments to himself, Apollos, Peter and Christ to communicate an illustration about divisions over human personalities in the congregation to avoid making a bad situation worse, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 508.
 - 2. Either way, Paul's point is the same with the same application in 1 Corinthians 1:13 (as follows):
 - a. Christ and His Church Universal are not divided, so the local church should not be divided, 1 Cor. 1:13a.
 - b. Since Christ was the One Who was crucified for man's sins, no believer should follow some mortal human personality in his Christian walk, but he should follow Christ instead, 1 Corinthians 1:13b.
 - c. Since believers are baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20), not in the name of any mortal human personality, no believer should follow a mortal human personality but instead follow God in His Christian walk, 1 Corinthians 1:13c.
- C. To enhance his point about focusing on following Christ versus human personalities, Paul digressed to express his thanksgiving for the fact that he baptized none of his Corinthian believers except Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanas, lest any man should claim that he had been baptized in Paul's name, 1 Cor. 1:14-16.
- D. [At this point, Paul's statements reveal the divine inspiration of Scripture did not involve God's dictating the words Paul was to write, but that the Holy Spirit superintended him in writing 1 Corinthians, utilizing Paul's personal mode of expression to pen the exact truth (Charles Caldwell Ryrie, The Holy Spirit, 1973, p. 33):
 - 1. In 1 Corinthians 1:14, Paul wrote that he had baptized none of his readers except Crispus and Gaius.
 - 2. However, Paul then recalled under the Holy Spirit's leading that he had also baptized the household of Stephanus, so he admitted this in writing 1 Corinthians 1:16a so he could write the full truth.
 - 3. Then, in case there was any other party he did not then himself recall that he had baptized, God led Paul to add in 1 Corinthians 1:16b that he did not recall if he had baptized anyone else at Corinth!
 - 4. Thus, God utilized Paul's free expression in his limitations as to memory, but then led him to expose those limitations so that what he ended up communicating was the exact truth!]
- E. Paul then wrote that Christ did not send him to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not with the wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect, 1 Corinthians 1:17. This statement is great proof that salvation is not by means of water baptism, but by faith alone in Christ alone! (Ibid.)
- F. Though divisions in a local body are evil, God sometimes lets them occur to reveal to the weak or carnal those who are approved of Him and those who are not, 1 Cor. 11:19; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 Cor. 1:10.

Lesson: (1) Paul called his readers to stop being divided over which mortal human personality they were to follow in their Christian walk by focusing on following Christ Who alone is the Head of the Church, Who alone was crucified for the salvation of the Church and in whose Name they were baptized. (2) Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 also support the divine superintendence view of the inspiration of Scripture, and (3) in 1 Corinthians 1:17, he asserted that faith in the Gospel, not water baptism, is the way one is saved. (4) We must recall that sometimes God allows divisions to occur unavoidably to reveal to the body those who are approved.

Application: (1) May we depart from following mortal human personalities to follow Christ alone that we not detract from, but contribute to Christian unity. (2) May we hold to the superintendence view of the inspiration of Scripture, that God did not dictate Scripture, but superintended the Bible's authors so that what they wrote was the exact truth. (3) May we also affirm that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, not by means of water baptism. (4) If divisions unavoidably arise, may we accept them as allowed of God to reveal those who are approved.