

divisions,i

Written by Morgan Clough
Tuesday, 11 June 2013 09:57 -

** I saw this article this morning and felt compelled to share, it was an awesome read ...there are NO PERFECT churches, ALL have some problems because imperfect people are in them....EVEN among churches there is DISUNITY---between the different denoiminations....

DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17

Once upon a time there was a body. It had enjoyed a healthy birth and a normal growth. Although there had been times of brief sickness and discomfort, these went through the usual healing processes and the body continued to grow and to function.

Then one day, the toes began to discuss among themselves the importance of wearing comfortable shoes. In the course of the conversation, it was observed that no other part of the body was in the habit of wearing shoes.

"But shoes are necessary for the protection of the body!" exclaimed one of the big toes. "We need to convince the other members of the body that they should also take to wearing shoes. But alas, the other members of the body could not see the need and would not comply with such demands. The toes decided that, for the good of the body, they would separate themselves from the other members of the body.

This had raised the question of what the various members of the body ought to wear. The legs stated that trousers were the only proper apparel. The torso claimed that a shirt ought to be worn. The hands disagreed, claiming that nothing was necessary, but that gloves were acceptable upon occasion.

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The members of the body began to quarrel with one another with the result that each member decided to withdraw from those other members with whom there was disagreement.

In the end, the body died.

Sounds a little silly, doesn't it? Yet this simple story serves to illustrate why there are so many dying churches in the world today.

Corinth was a church divided. There were divisions within the church. These divisions were threatening to tear the church apart. In far off Ephesus, Paul had heard the news of these divisions that plagued the church. He moved to deal with this problem.

THE PROBLEM PRESENTED

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

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

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." (1 Corinthians 1:10-12).

The church at Corinth had some serious problems. They had polarized themselves into a series of "clicks." If you were not a part of their particular group, then you did not count in their eyes.

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Notice also that the case of this disunity was not of a doctrinal nature. There may have been some doctrinal problems in Corinth, but this disunity was not a part of that.

There are times when there ought to be division in the church. When someone holds to a false teaching or when someone rejects a Biblical teaching, then it is time for some disunity. A person who rejects the teaching that Jesus is the Son of God does not belong in the church. A person who does not believe that salvation is a gift from God has no place within the community of believers.

But this was not a doctrinal division at Corinth. These groups had not been formed on the basis of their doctrinal beliefs. We know this because we know something of the leaders that were used as the centers for each of these groups.

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." (1 Corinthians 1:12).

These Corinthians had held a popularity contest and there had been four nominees. They had separated themselves four groups and they each claimed to be following after a man.

1. The Paul Group.

This first group wanted to be loyal to Paul. After all, he was the one who had begun the church at Corinth and he deserved their undivided loyalty.

2. The Apollos Group.

Apollos was a young preacher who had visited Corinth and who had preached there for a time. Acts 18:11 says that he was "an eloquent man" (anhr logios). Apparently he was known for his

impressive speaking ability. The people who followed him may have been impressed by the big words that he used.

3. The Peter Group.

This group may have been the working class. They could identify with the tough, gruff fisherman from Galilee who had been given the keys to the kingdom.

4. The Jesus Group.

It could be that this group had a false piety that said, "You other people can listen to all of those other Bible teachers, but we won't listen to anyone but Jesus." They had a party in which they burned all of their commentaries and now they walked around with their nose in the air and dismissed all that did not belong to their party.

Paul does not advocate any of these groups. He does not even advocate the Jesus Group. He says that they are all wrong because they are all dividing the church. People were arguing over which group you ought to belong and they were disassociating themselves from anyone who did not belong to their exclusive group.

There is a lesson here. It is that the church of God ought to be UNIFIED. When we speak of the church, we often think of a building where you go on Sunday to hear the teaching of the Bible. But this is not the church at all. The church is not the building, but the people inside the building. The church is a living thing. It is a body.

Notice that Paul's exhortation comes *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:10). When we read this, we ought to remember that Paul could speak *ex cathedra*. He was an apostle. He could say, "You guys straighten up or I'm going to come and bust some heads!" But that was not his approach. Instead he gives an exhortation by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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He says, "In light of the fact that you are now saved and in fellowship with Jesus Christ, I am giving you a message in the name of that One with whom you have been identified."

Paul calls these Corinthians "brethren." They were believers in Jesus Christ. They were already Christians. That means this is a family letter. If you are not a member of the family of God, then this is not written to you. You are an outsider who is looking in. But you don't have to stay on the outside. You can come and join God's family. You can trust in the work that Jesus accomplished on the cross and you can receive the free gift of eternal life. If you do so, you will find that this exhortation is also written to you.

Notice the specifics of Paul's exhortation. It is an exhortation...

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- That they all agree.
- That there be no divisions among them.
- That they be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

These three points can be summed up in a single word. UNITY. There is to be unity among the members of the body of Christ. Paul says, "Because you are in fellowship with Jesus Christ (1:9), you ought to be in fellowship with one another."