

Sunday, July 26, 2015—I Corinthians 1:11-16: Is Christ Divided?

Introduction

- Last week we continued our series of studies through I Corinthians by looking at verse 10. In doing so, we noted that verse 10 marks a shift in the passage, Paul begins to beseech the Corinthians on the basis of the positional truths presented in verses 1 through 9 to a particular course of action. Please recall the following general points regarding Paul’s beseeching of the Corinthians in verse 10:
 - To “beseech” is consistent with grace. It is different from ordering or commanding.
 - “Beseeching” is most often done on the basis of someone or something.
- Specifically, in verse 10 Paul is beseeching the Corinthians “by the name of Lord Jesus Christ” that they might:
 - All speak the same thing.
 - Be no divisions among you.
 - Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.
- I Corinthians 2:16—it is only on the basis of the mind of Christ working in the Corinthians that they are going to be able to function with this type of unity.
- Contextually, the first application of this passage is to the local church in Corinth.
- This morning I want to continue with our study of I Corinthians 1 by considering verses 11-16.

I Corinthians 1:11

- **For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them [which are of the house] of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.**
- Acts 19:21-22—at some point after leaving Corinth (Acts 19:18), Paul received word from members of the house of Chloe regarding the contentions developing within the Corinthian church.
- Contentions—note the present tense nature of the report, “there **are** contentions among you.” The report given by those of the house of Chloe is not that there might be contentions developing in Corinth but that there are (present tense) contentions.

- According to *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* the English word “contentions” carries the following meanings: 1) Strife; struggle; a violent effort to obtain something, or to resist a person, claim or injury; contest; quarrel. 2) Strife in words or debate; quarrel; angry contest; controversy. 3) Strife or endeavor to excel; emulation. 4) Eagerness; zeal; ardor; vehemence of endeavor.
- The Greek word translated “contentions” occurs 9 time in 9 verses throughout the New Testament and is variously rendered in English by the King James translators as:
 - Debate(s)—Rom. 1:29, II Cor. 12:20
 - Strife—Rom. 13:13, I Cor. 3:3, Phil. 1:15, I Tim. 6:4
 - Variance—Gal. 5:20—“Difference that produces dispute or controversy; disagreement; dissension; discord.” (*Webster's 1828*)
 - Contentions—Titus 3:9
- A consideration of these words helps us to understand the state of the Corinthians church when Paul wrote I Corinthians. It also serves to bring into focus the nature of Paul’s beseeching in verse 10.
- Lastly with respect to verse 11, this verse begins the section of the book where Paul is addressing the Corinthians with respect to the reports he has received from without of their affairs (I Cor. 5:1). Please recall that in the second half of the book Paul address questions that the Corinthians had written him about (I Cor. 7:1).

I Corinthians 1:12

- **Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.**
- Verse 12 provides insight into the nature of the “contentions” that were occurring in Corinth. Note that every one of the Corinthians were saying, “I am of _____.”
- The Corinthians had developed a system of man-exalting factions that were threatening to divide the assembly.
 - Paulinians—these were the Pauline loyalists who championed the freedom of Paul’s gospel and claimed primacy for Paul as the founder of their church.
 - Apollonians—were the intellectuals who were carried away by the eloquence and seeming superiority of the brilliant Alexandrine expositor who had made such a flash among them since Paul’s first visit (Acts 18:24, 19:1).

- Cephasites—this was the Peter block who were more enamored with Law keeping and the trapping of religious ritualism. No doubt their boast was that Peter was the authoritative voice of the apostles and the leader of the Jerusalem Church.
- Christians—these were the party of Christ who utilized the Lord’s name/title as a divisive way of implying the inferiority of the other groups.
- Thus were the names of Lord’s public servants and of the Lord Himself played off each other until a serious of rivalries threatened the unity and practical functioning of the assembly. According to verse 12, “every one” of the Corinthians had been involved in creating this cult of personality.

I Corinthians 1:13

- **Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?**
- In an attempt to point out the utter folly of their thinking and conduct, Paul asks a series of questions. The obvious answer to all these questions is no.
 - Christ is not divided.
 - Paul was not crucified for the Corinthians.
 - They were not baptized in the name of Paul.
- This type of question is something that Paul does often in his epistles as he seeks to lead his readers through the correct way to think about a situation or point of doctrine.

I Corinthians 1:14-16

- **I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.**
- These verses bring up Paul’s baptism practices while in Corinth. This week I want to simply understand what these verses are dealing with contextually. Next week we will talk more about Paul’s teaching and practice regarding water baptism during the period of Israel’s diminishing in the book of Acts.
- Acts 18:8—there is no doubt that “many” people were baptized with water while Paul was in Corinth. The question is whether or not all these people were baptized by Paul himself, or someone else?

- In I Corinthians 1:14-16, Paul mentions that he baptized two individuals, i.e., Crispus and Gaius as well as the household of Stephanas. Beyond that Paul says “I know not whether I baptized any other.”
- Bible critics have attempted to cry foul on this point by noting the apparent contradiction between “many” in Acts 18:8 and the few baptisms Paul mentions and appears to be emphasizing in I Corinthians 1:14-16.
- Besides the fact that we have are given no details regarding the size of the “household of Stephanas,” Paul’s main point in verses 14 through 16 is in line with the three rhetorical questions he asked in verse 13. Note verse 15, “Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.”
- In other words, Paul’s main point in verses 14 through 16 is not to give a complete run down of all the people he baptized while in Corinth. Rather his point is to emphasis that fact whatever he did was not done to advance his own name and standing.
- The very fact that Paul cannot recall if he baptized anyone else besides Crisps, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas proves that Paul was not seeking to create his own faction by baptizing in his own name.
- This in turn strengthens the nature Paul’s over all rebuke of the Corinthians in the context for functioning with a factionist and contentions spirit.
- Lastly, I think we need to assume that Paul knows who and how many people he baptized while in Corinth. While Acts 18:8 reports that many baptism occurred in Corinth while Paul was there the text does not identify Paul was the one performing them all.