

Chapter One

THE PROBLEM OF SCHISM (1:1-31)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. How could Paul address people with so many spiritual failures as “saints” and “sanctified”? (1:2)
2. Do Christians have to all agree on everything and think alike? (1:10)
3. If Christ did not send Paul to baptize, is baptism then not essential to salvation? (1:17)
4. Does Paul’s denunciation of the “wisdom of the wise” mean Christians should reject all human knowledge? (1:20-25)

SECTION 1

Unity Originates in the Character of God (1:1-17)

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, **5**that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—**6**even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you—**7**so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; **8**who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9**God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

10 I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. **11**For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. **12**What

I mean is that each one of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I am thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius; ¹⁵lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1:1-3 Consecration: Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born near the beginning of the first century in the busy Graeco-Roman city of Tarsus in Cilicia at the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea. He was born with Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28); the son of a Pharisee and a Pharisee himself (Acts 23:6), he could have boasted of the purest Hebrew background (Phil. 3:5). As a young Jewish patriot and fledgling rabbi he persecuted the Christians with zeal (Acts 7:58—8:3; 9:1-2; 26:9-11; I Tim. 1:13) until his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-21). Calling himself "chief of sinners" (I Tim. 1:15), he forever after attributed the change in his life to the overflowing grace of the Lord toward him (I Tim. 1:12-17). Paul studied at the feet of the famous Hebrew rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; 26:4-5). He was well educated in the literature of the Greeks (Acts 17:28) and was a world traveler with a cosmopolitan attitude (I Cor. 9:19-23). The authenticity and historicity of this epistle is beyond question.

Paul begins by stating that he was *called* (Gr. *kletos*, means more than "invited"—it has the connotation of being *uniquely chosen*) by the *will* of God to be an apostle. Paul is declaring that he is in the service of God not by any merit of his own but by the sovereign call of God's grace. When Paul wrote to churches where his authority as an apostle was unchallenged, he did not assert his apostolic title (Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 1:1; Philemon 1); but when he corresponded with a church or churches where his apostolic authority might be questioned, he always declared his office in the salutation and sometimes presented the evidence for his apostleship (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Col. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1).

On his first missionary journey (45-48 A.D.) Paul established churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) (Acts 13:1—15:35). On his

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second missionary journey (Acts 15:36—18:22) he established churches in Macedonia and Achaia (modern Greece) (51-54 A.D.). It was during this second journey that Paul established the church in Corinth.

The third missionary journey took three years (54-58 A.D.) and, after spending three months in Achaia (Acts 20:3), he stopped in Ephesus for about two or three years. It was from this residence in Ephesus he received communication from Corinth and wrote back to them this epistle. A Christian named *Sosthenes* was with him in Ephesus. That this is Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:17), is doubtful. Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, seems to have been an enemy of Paul.

Paul addressed the Christians in Corinth as “the church of God.” The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* (related to the same word Paul used to describe his “call” to apostleship). *Ekklesia* means literally “the called out ones.” It was used in the Greek world to denote the convening of the assembly of all the citizens of a particular city to fulfill the functions necessary for the maintenance of their social structure; a “town-meeting.” Paul adapts the word to the church for the very same purpose. William Barclay says: “In essence, therefore, the Church, the *ekklesia*, is a body of people, not so much assembling because they have chosen to come together, but assembling because God has called them to Himself; not so much assembling to share their own thoughts and opinions, but assembling to listen to the voice of God.” The word *ekklesia* as it is used in the New Testament certainly connotes those who have been *called out* of a life conformed to this wicked world order unto a life transformed into the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul emphasizes the fact that those addressed are a “church” of God because God had *sanctified* them. The Greek words *hegiasmenois* (sanctified) and *hagiois* (saints) mean literally “to set apart, to consecrate, to separate for a specific use.” Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* declares these words do not denote some ethical attainment but rather define the state into which God, through the grace merited by Christ, has made available membership in his kingdom (the church) and all the attendant blessings of salvation. Sanctification is the separation of the believer from evil things and ways. This is God’s will for the believer (I Thess. 4:3); it must be learned from God as he teaches it by his Word (I Thess. 4:4; John 17:17, 19; Ps. 17:4; 119:9) and it must be pursued by the believer, earnestly and undeviatingly (I Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14). Men must

deliberately choose the sanctification which the Lord provides and promises. They must pursue it through the directions and instrumentalities which are authorized exclusively in the revealed Word of God.

At first, reading only the salutation, the idea that a church of Christ might exist in Corinth would present no problem. That Paul addresses the members of that church as "those called to be saints," would be initially acceptable also. By the time one has read to the end of this epistle, however, he may find it difficult to believe that a church could ever have been formed in such surroundings and, once formed, that it could have survived. When Paul wrote this letter, the church was not much over six years old. It should give twentieth-century Christians pause to note that the condition of the Corinthian church is a specific example of our Lord's parables insisting that the growth of the kingdom is slow and difficult (cf. Matt. 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18) and the devil is always sowing tares in the same field in which God's servants are sowing good seed. Christians today should learn from this that no matter how spiritually immature a member of the Lord's church might be, he is called by God to be a saint and is a brother in Christ if he is willing to be taught the word of God and is willing to conform his mind and life to that Word. No matter how wrong some of these Corinthians were about doctrine and practices, so long as they were willing to receive his divinely-inspired instruction and grow toward it, he said they were "sanctified in Christ Jesus." We can do no less today! Of course, a brother who blatantly defies apostolic doctrine (such as the man in I Cor. 5:1ff.) and refuses to repent must be "delivered unto Satan" for the destruction of the fleshly mind. Once such a brother repents, however, the church is to forgive him (see II Cor. 2:5-17). A congregation of Christians is not sanctified in Christ because it has reached a pre-determined level of spirituality, but because every member is constantly struggling and growing into the image of God's beloved Son (cf. Rom. 8:29; II Cor. 3:18; II Peter 1:3-21).

Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that they belong to a universal brotherhood of saints—all who in every place call on the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior. This reminder is to have its impact on the whole situation at Corinth. Paul wants them to understand they are a part of a whole body of Christians. When they have divisions, immoralities, jealousies and other disorders, the whole body of Christ throughout the world will be affected, one way or another. No congregation is an island! Every saint in every congregation is

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called *together* with all those who in every place call on the name of Jesus as Lord.

So, as Paul salutes the Christians at Corinth, he begins his argument against the factionalism in the church there. He salutes them as “those sanctified . . . called to be saints” and they are thus *because* the God who called them and to whom they profess allegiance is “sanctified.” That is, God is holy! There is absolutely no falsehood or wickedness in God’s nature, nor was any manifested in God’s Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Those who call upon the name of Jesus Christ as Lord (God) must be holy. Division and schism are unholy. God does not divide himself and fight himself. He is not jealous of his Son’s glory nor is his Son jealous of the Father’s glory. They glorify one another. Christians cannot love one another “earnestly from the heart” unless they aspire to and act in *imitation* of the holiness of God (see I Peter 1:13-25). Those who destroy God’s “holy temple” (the church) by division and partyism are trying to destroy God—and they will be destroyed (I Cor. 3:16-17). Christians are called to be members of the “sanctified” (holy) body of Christ throughout the world. Disunity, factionalism and jealousy make a mockery of the call of God for sanctification. The congregation that is constantly bickering and separating one brother from another is not holy—it is carnal and no different than the strife-filled, discriminatory, cliquey “clubs” of unregenerate men.

Unity has its origin or source in the nature and character of God. Unity cannot exist without holiness and sanctified living. Jesus’ longest recorded prayer is for the unity of his followers through sanctification (holiness) in the truth (see John 17:13-26).

Grace and peace are part of God’s holy nature. The word *grace* is from the Greek word *charis*, and means “something granted, a favor given, a gift.” We get the English word *charisma* from it. Paul is reminding the Corinthian Christians that their sanctification is only by the favor granted them by God through Jesus Christ. They did not earn the right to be sanctified—it was by the grace of God. Therefore, the love of Christ should have constrained them to dwell together in unity. If *all* Christians are sanctified by the grace of God and by no merit of their own one has no right to esteem himself above another and no cause for jealousy and division. Peace in Hebrew is *shalom* and means wholeness or well-being. The Greek word for peace, *eirene*, was often used in the same way. It means health, harmony and integrated wholeness. God, in Christ, has called men to peace (unity, harmony). The church is God’s kingdom of peace, God’s holy habitation of peace (see Eph. 2:11-22). God, by

the vicarious atonement of Christ's death, has declared himself at peace with rebellious man. Those who accept the peace Christ earned for them must practice peace with all other men (Rom. 12:14-21). In fact, the peace of Christ must be allowed to *arbitrate* (Col. 3:15, Gr. *brabeueto*, rule) in the hearts of men. All decisions a Christian makes are to be decided on the basis of the meaning and application of the peace Christ has wrought for him. When this is so, there is no schism in the kingdom of God.

1:4-9 Constancy: God is gracious. And God is also constant. He is faithful. What God promises, he will fulfill. Christ's body, the church, finds both *motive* and *source* of unity in God's faithfulness. Paul was always *giving thanks* (Gr. *eucharisto*, present tense verb, continuing action) for God's faithfulness and grace to the Corinthians. The Corinthian Christians had been made rich (Gr. *ep'loutisthete*, aorist) when they answered the call to be set apart (sanctified) unto Christ. Christ had seen fit to bless the Corinthian church with many miraculous gifts (cf. I Cor. 12:1—14:40). Paul mentions two of those miraculous gifts, "speech" and "knowledge." The Greek word for "speech" is *logos* and is usually translated "word." This probably means the miracle of declaring divine revelation. It is translated "utterance" in II Corinthians 8:7. *Knowledge* in Greek is *gnosis* (from which the English word *gnostic* comes) and refers, in this context, to a miraculous understanding of the miraculous revelation.

The testimony to Christ's faithfulness to fulfill his promises was *confirmed*. Paul uses the Greek word *ebebaiothe*, a word found frequently in Greek papyri to describe the confirmation of a business transaction. God settled the issue of his faithfulness to the Corinthians by extending a special measure of grace to them, making them *excel* (II Cor. 8:7) in miraculous gifts. The Corinthian church was second to none in experiencing Christ's faithfulness to confirm the gospel by miraculous gifts (cf. Heb. 2:4; II Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:7, etc.). They were by no means *lacking* (Gr. *hustereisthai*, last, lagging behind). Christ had kept his word. They had all they needed while they waited in daily expectation for his return. There was no lack that could justify their jealousies and factionalisms. They should not have divided up to follow other leaders as if to find in such division something *more* to sustain them against the judgment day. Christ alone gives the revelation and knowledge necessary for that. No other leader has anything to say about salvation worth hearing! If that be true, there is no reason in heaven or on earth for Christians to divide over human leaders or institutions. The unity of God's kingdom

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has its source in this characteristic of God and his Son, Jesus Christ—absolute faithfulness!

The sentence in the Greek text (v. 9) begins literally, "Faithful, the God through whom you were called . . ." It stresses God's faithfulness. *Faithful* is the very name of God. And if *he* called the Corinthians into communion (Gr. *koinonian*, fellowship, sharing) with his Son, he is certainly able by himself to sustain them. They need not divide up, compete with one another, or follow other leaders. Factionalism would make the world believe the God of the Corinthian Christians was impotent, unfaithful and less than absolute. And that is precisely what division in Christendom does in the twentieth century!

The grace of God had made it possible for these Corinthians to have the saving work of Christ imputed to them. God saw to it that they were second to none in possessing miraculous gifts. They had advantages other Christians did not have. Their disgraceful conduct (division, immorality in the church, disorderly worship, vanity, pride, and misapprehension of true doctrine) was not because God supplied them insufficiently with divine direction or that God was unfaithful toward them. It was due to their own spiritual immaturity and refusal to grow.

1:10-17 Completeness: "Is Christ divided?" Paul appeals for a mentality and practice of Christian unity in the Corinthian church on the basis of the oneness of God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one!" (Deut. 6:4). God is *one* in character, in purpose and in action. There is no variation in him (James 1:17). Jesus declared that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit were one and the same person (cf. John 1:1-18; 14:1-11; 14:18-24; 8:25-30, etc.). Paul clearly taught that Jesus was God when he wrote, "For in him (Christ) the whole fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily . . ." (Col. 2:9; see also II Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:19; Gal. 3:20). Even the prophet Isaiah declared the triune oneness of God (Isa. 48:16). Jesus claimed he *always* agreed with and did perfectly the works of God because he *was* God (cf. John 5:17-46; 6:45; 8:28-30; 8:58; 10:22-39; 15:7-11; 16:15; 17:1-5, etc.). That Jesus was God in the flesh is certainly a verifiable proposition. His deity was established historically by the signs and wonders he did in the presence of men (cf. Acts 2:22; 26:26). The "Shema" (Deut. 6:4) means more than simply enumerating Jehovah as the only God there is. It means that he is one integrally—that is, he is perfectly unified, totally single in purpose, objective and goal. God may manifest himself in three persons, but his mind, his will, his heart, his actions and his purpose are absolutely undivided. God is not man

that he should change or be divided (Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Isa. 40:8; 55:11).

Paul appealed (Gr. *parakalo*, "called upon") to the Christians at Corinth on the basis of the name, or authority, of the one Lord of all Christians, Jesus Christ. His appeal was that they all *agree* (Gr. lit. *hina to auto legete pantes*, "that the one thing you may be saying, all."). The KJV translates it, "... that ye all speak the same thing . . ." In the present context, this unquestionably means Paul is directing them to all say one thing (all agree on one thing) which is: there is only one church of God—one body of Christians—over which Jesus Christ alone is the head. Paul is not here insisting that all Christians must agree on every issue of life—especially those issues not expressly commanded or clearly enjoined in the New Testament. All Christians are free, in Christ, to have opinions which may differ from other Christians in matters where the New Testament gives no specified direction. But even our opinions must be subordinated to the authoritative commands of the New Testament for brotherly love, peace, doctrinal purity, unity of the church and edification of one's brother. *Agreement*, in this context, applies primarily to the fundamental New Testament doctrine of the *oneness* of the body of Christ. There are not many *different* churches, separated according to differing teachings of human leaders, constituting *the* church of Christ. If the church of Christ is *essentially* one, as Thomas Campbell said in his Declaration and Address, then to speak of a divided church is a contradiction of terms. If it is *intentionally* one, to divide it is to disobey the intentions of Christ. If it is *constitutionally* one, it implies conformity to a plan or constitutional (Biblical) organization which must be inherent in the revealed will of its Head.

Paul considered himself free to exercise his own opinions about cultural preferences, evangelistic methods, and marital status so long as the Lord Jesus had not plainly commanded otherwise. But Paul had also committed himself so completely to the law of love he would relinquish his freedom to exercise personal opinion if opinion caused a brother to sin (see I Corinthians, chapters 8, 9, 10, and Romans, chapter 14). Paul would not divide the body of Christ over one of his own opinions. He certainly would not allow any attempt to divide it over human personalities to go unrebuked.

The Corinthian Christians are exhorted to refrain from *dissension*. The Greek word is stronger than that—it is *schizmata*, meaning, to rend, to split, to break. In non-biblical Greek the word was used to describe "cleaving the head with an axe," or "a ship breaking to pieces in the sea." Greek cultic religions punished members for

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schizmata (division) in the same manner they punished someone for stealing from or deceiving a member of their cult. Cancer cells within the human body are physical *schizmata*. Division within the church is destructive. The Greek word *schizo* is used as a prefix to many English words used in psychology to describe the mental disorder sometimes referred to as "split-personality." *Schizophrenia* is "a type of psychosis characterized by loss of contact with (withdrawal from) environment (reality) and by disintegration of personality." That is an apt description of a divided Christendom! Modern Christendom has a spiritual sickness (psychosis) characterized by loss of contact with (withdrawal from) its real unity in Christ and evidences a disintegrated personality to a lost world! Dividing the church of God is a *sin*. It is called a "work of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21). There the words are *dichostasiai*, from which we get the English word *dichotomy* (stand apart), and *haireseis*, from which we have the English word *heresy* (to defect, to divide). James wrote that the *contention* which causes division (Gr. *eritheian*, from *Eris*, goddess of strife and fighting) is *demonical*! Indeed, the devil is the master designer of all division in the church. The devil is an anarchist, a divider, a liar and a murderer from Eden until now. Those who deliberately practice and cherish dividing the church of Jesus Christ into opposing, unbelieving, unloving factions are children of the devil.

The apostle urges these Christians to "be *united* in the same mind and the same judgment." The Greek word *katertismenoi* translated *united* means, "be repaired" or "be restored." It is used in Matt. 4:21; Mark 1:19 to describe the "folding together" of the fishermen's nets. In II Cor. 13:11 Paul tells the Corinthians to "mend" their ways. The idea is to restore or repair something that has been disordered to its proper order so that it will be fit for productive use. Christian unity is not something which originates from man—it originates from God. At the time a human being becomes a Christian God joins that new-born being to the body of Christ. We *are* joined—we do not join. Once we are joined to Christ's body (the church) we must "give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). There are times when Christians may sin and promote division, but they must repent and be diligent to "repair and restore" that unity by surrendering to the will of Christ for their lives.

Paul insisted that unity would not come until these Christians were "restored" (united) in the *same* (Gr. *auto*, one, only, same) mind and same *judgment* (Gr. *gnome*, understanding, means of knowing). Some commentators insist that the Corinthian Christians were not

dividing over central or doctrinal issues, but over diverse opinions. Consider the following issues over which there seemed to be not only differences but *divisions*:

- a. The issue as to whether *who* baptized a person was more crucial than the doctrine of the cross (I Cor. 1).
- b. The issue of divine revelation and apostolic inspiration and inerrancy (I Cor. 2).
- c. The issue of sanctification and church discipline (I Cor. 5 & 6).
- d. The issue of marriage and divorce (I Cor. 7).
- e. The issues of idolatrous associations; of Christian liberty; of apostolic rights (I Cor. 8, 9, 10).
- f. The issue of who is the Lord's body and of judging others and improper observance of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11).
- g. The issue of immaturity; of misuse of spiritual gifts; of indecency and disorder in worship (I Cor. 12, 13, 14).
- h. The issue as to whether there can be a resurrection from the dead or not—perhaps even belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ an issue! (I Cor. 15).

Most of these are more crucial than differences of opinion. They are doctrinal issues. We believe the Lord intends his church to be of the same mentality, knowing the same revelation of his will and understanding his will the same way. We believe that is the reason the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write this epistle to the Corinthian Christians. The Lord intended the church at Corinth to come to the same understanding, to think the same and act the same way in all the matters to which Paul gave instruction in this epistle.

Is it possible for Christians to all understand the Bible alike? Of course it is! God wrote his book in human language. That is what Paul clearly says in chapter two of this epistle. The Bible is to be understood by using the same principles of understanding human language one would use in understanding any other book. There are some fundamental guidelines used by every one who reads in order to understand what another person has written:

- a. The correct and true interpretation of any written communication is what the *author intended* to say—not what the reader *wants* the author to say.
- b. God intended only one ultimate meaning in every word he has written in the Bible—not many conflicting meanings for each word.

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- c. God is certainly able to say what he intends to say and he knows to whom he speaks. God expects men to be *able* to understand his message to them and insists they *must* if they are to be saved.
- d. To understand a communication from another person we must investigate how he uses words. To do, that we must take into account grammatical structure, context, historical usage, historical circumstances, parallel passages, etc.

This is why Paul states emphatically in I Corinthians 2:13 that the mind of God has been imparted to mankind (through the apostles) in *words*—human language. No human being could have known the mind (will) of God had it *not* been delivered through words (human language). God wants all men to know and understand his will. And God wants all men to understand it alike! Paul repeated this appeal many times (cf. Rom. 15:5-6; II Cor. 13:11; Phil. 1:27; 2:2) and so did Peter (I Peter 3:8).

As long as Christians have different levels of scriptural *knowledge*, there will exist differences in spiritual mentality and judgment. One of the major functions for which the church was established was to bring all followers of Christ to “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to *mature* manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . .” (Eph. 4:13). Bringing all Christians to the same (unified) faith and knowledge in *mature* (Gr. *teleion*, perfected, attained the goal) manhood to the *stature* (Gr. *helikias*, adulthood, grown up) of Christ is the purpose of ministry. The very fact that some Christians are content to be deficient in the knowledge of God’s word gives the devil fertile ground in which to produce division! The church must not neglect the imperative ministry of edifying every member in the scriptures. A *primary goal* for the church is to bring all members to the same level of knowledge of God’s word. Until it gives priority to that goal it is *not* giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Bible study must have *top* priority in the church!

A woman member of the Corinthian church named Chloe had apparently visited Paul in Ephesus, with members of her household (people), and they had informed Paul of the divisions and quarreling (Gr. *erides*, strife) among the Christians. Practically every Christian (“each one of you”) in Corinth was involved in the strife. Christians were forming certain doctrinal and/or non-doctrinal stands opposing one another and striving against one another. Beyond that they were trying to make out that they followed divinely-appointed leaders of

Christianity who also opposed one another in these differences of doctrine and opinion. Some had even attempted to portray Paul, Peter and Apollos as opposing Christ and Christ opposing these leaders. Satan still dupes theologians and religious leaders today with the same sophistry—alleged doctrinal differences between Paul and Peter and Christ. It is absurd to think that the absolute, almighty, inerrant Holy Spirit of God would contradict himself as he spoke through these. But the biggest lie the devil perpetrates is that these men were not divinely inspired and inerrant instruments of the Holy Spirit. They were, according to many modern theologians, fallible and often mistaken in what they wrote. Before unity in the church is ever “repaired” or “restored” the issue of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible must be settled.

What the attraction was that polarized these Christians toward certain human leaders we do not know for certain. Perhaps it was “seniority” or the “successes” which the parties claimed for their superiority over one another. Peter was one of the first called to be an apostle and was recognized spokesman for the twelve a number of times. Paul, on the other hand, had demonstrated phenomenal success with evangelism and missionary endeavors to the whole Gentile world. Apollos was a man noted by many in the Roman world for his eloquence (for which neither Paul nor Peter was noted). Paul’s question, “Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” means divisions were being made according to who the baptizer might have been. There is no historical evidence whatever that Peter was ever in Corinth. There might have been some people in the Corinthian church who had been baptized by Peter in Palestine on the Day of Pentecost (or later) who then returned to Corinth. The divisions were probably more according to *alleged* differences in doctrine than anything else. There is only one name in which Christians are baptized—the name of Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Acts 4:12). Men are not to be baptized in the name of the church.

Paul was thankful that he had not baptized many at Corinth with his own hands lest some glory in the fact they had been immersed by the great apostle Paul. Paul would not have his name used by these factions to set themselves apart from others. Paul had immersed Crispus, ruler of a synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:8), and Gaius (identity unknown), and the household of Stephanas, first convert of Achaia (I Cor. 16:15). He could remember no others. Paul would have a difficult time understanding some preachers today who take great pains to advertise the number of baptisms

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they perform. Paul's statement that he was not sent by Christ to baptize but to preach the gospel must not be taken to mean that Paul considered baptism unessential or of little importance. Baptism was and is an essential part of the gospel message of salvation. Paul submitted to baptism himself as necessary to washing away his sins (Acts 22:16). He stated in his writings that it was the act of obedient faith which brought penitent believers *into* covenant participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-11). He implies that only as many as are baptized into Christ have "put on Christ" and are sons of God, Abraham's spiritual offspring, heirs according to the messianic promise (Gal. 3:25-29). Paul taught people to be *baptized* (Gr. *baptizo*, immerse, plunge, dip) when he preached or there would never have been any question raised about some claiming to have been baptized in Paul's name! We have documented proof that people were baptized as a consequence of Paul's having preached what to *do* to be saved (Acts 16:14-15; 16:29-34; 18:8). When Paul preached, most often others did the baptizing. John writes in his Gospel about Jesus, "The Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John—Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples (did)," (John 4:1-2). The twelve apostles undoubtedly did not, with their own hands, baptize each of the three thousand believers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38ff.). There is no commandment in the New Testament that only an ordained clergyman may officiate at the immersion of a believer into Christ. For the sake of propriety, it would be preferable to have someone who was already an immersed believer in Christ to immerse new believers; but it might be an elder, a deacon, a father baptizing a son, a son baptizing a father, or, most appropriate, a Christian baptizing the person he has brought to belief. There was no problem with immersion in water in obedience to the gospel covenant of salvation in the first century church; neither in mode nor purpose. The problem Paul had to deal with here is sectarianism, not gospel immersion. It is not immersion Paul is renouncing here but the argument over who immersed whom! He is disclaiming the idea that being immersed by any particular human leader makes the immersed one a member of any religious faction or party. He *is* saying it is possible to *overemphasize* baptism. Baptism is not redemption. Redemption is what Christ did on the cross and through his resurrection. Christ's command, and that of the apostles, to be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, et. al.) is one of the initial covenant terms by which that redemption is to be granted. The New Testament is plain: to possess redemption requires covenant relationship and covenant relationship

requires, initially, faith, repentance and immersion. But to make the person or party by whom one is immersed the central issue of redemption is to empty the cross of Christ of its power. Paul says, “*He* (Christ) is the source of our . . . redemption” (I Cor. 1:30). Being immersed into Christ is not the *source* of our redemption; Christ is the source. But we cannot receive that source without accepting the Source’s terms. Immersion into Christ does not tap us into different sources—it unites us in the One and Only Source! That is what Christ sent Paul to preach. And preach it he did!

Paul declares that he was not given the commission of apostle of Christ to compete in sophisticated word-games (Gr. *sophia logou*). He wanted no one to become his disciple or trust their redemption in his eloquence or other abilities. The fact of the cross of Christ cannot apply its power when human pride gathers followers through human cleverness. Such an approach inevitably produces heresy and destroys unity in Christ.

Unity Operates Through the Instrumentality of the Gospel (1:18-25)

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the
wise,
and the cleverness of the clever I
will thwart.”

²⁰Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1:18-20 Because the Gospel is Revelational: Unification of men and women from all different strata of humankind in one brotherhood of peace and love is operative only by the instrumentality of the

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gospel of Christ. That is so because only the gospel of Christ is the final, complete and perfect revelation from God. It alone is the divinely-sanctioned, perfectly-delivered, and supernaturally-functional instrument for man's redemption. Paul says the *word* (Gr. *logos*, teaching, doctrine) of the cross is *foolishness* (Gr. *moria*, moronic, stupidity) to those who are continuing to perish. However, God's declaration and demonstration that in the cross (and the resurrection) of Jesus Christ he atoned for all the sins of all the world is the *dynamic* (Gr. *dunamis*, power, dynamic) of God to those who are continuing to be saved through it. The Greek prepositions *apollumenois* (perishing) and *sozomenois* (being saved) are present tense, denoting a continuing action. Those who continue willfully to perish, reject the fact and doctrine of the cross as moronic. It does not make sense, from a strictly human perspective, that someone else should suffer (or could suffer) for my sins. It does not seem reasonable; it does not seem fair. Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, former head of the World Council of Churches, wrote the following:

We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all the sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone. (*A Testament of the Faith*, 1958, pg. 144)

That is precisely why the doctrine of the substitutionary, vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary must be established on the basis of the historically-verified resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is a doctrine that is unacceptable to human pride. It is a doctrine that must be accepted on the basis of faith (a faith based on verification). It is a doctrine *revealed*. Jesus teaches that man's willingness to accept revelation from God is *primary* in the matter of kingdom citizenship (see comments on Matt. 11:1-30, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. II*, pp. 426-594, by Harold Fowler, College Press). So long as there are those claiming citizenship in the kingdom of God unwilling to let God give arbitrary, indisputable, seemingly-irrational revelations, there will be division. No nation can have a dependable, unified army if it has no final authority—the commander-in-chief.

Verse 19 is a quotation of Isaiah 29:14 as God's prophecy that he would, in the messianic era, deliver a divine revelation which would destroy dependence upon human pride and wisdom for salvation.

The student should study both Isaiah chapters 28 and 29 in their entirety. Isaiah is predicting the messianic kingdom to come as one in which men would humble themselves and let God teach them by revelation rather than presumptuously thinking they knew all they needed to know through their own wisdom. Isaiah has a great deal to say (and so do all the prophets) about the fact that God is aiming to build in the messianic age (the church) a kingdom filled with people willingly surrendered to total guidance, in every area of life, under the revealed word of his Messiah. That is a fundamental issue of the prophets; “they shall all be taught by God” (see Isa. 54:13; John 6:45). Through thousands of years of history God allowed one human philosophy, religion, and political system after another to come and go. They each repeated themselves, so that even in Solomon’s day he could say, “There is nothing new under the sun.”

God is one—he is not divided. His mind, will and purpose are all united. The unity of God’s revealed will (the Bible) may be thoroughly demonstrated by simply comparing it with the pronouncements and writings of the “scribes and debaters” of the ages. Philosophers, theologians, scientists, teachers and sages have contradicted and negated one another consistently since the world began. Their inability to find unity in human tenets has been the cause of men dividing themselves from one another and from God. But the Bible, because it is a divine revelation of the One Unified Being, God, produces unity when every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God is destroyed by the gospel and every human thought is taken captive to obey Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5). The power of the gospel to change wicked, idolatrous pagans into loving, believing, hoping people demonstrated the utter foolishness of the alleged “wisdom” of the ancient philosophies and philosophers. Claiming to be wise, the ancient philosophers exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and became fools (see Rom. 1:18-32). That was not simply theoretical—that was demonstrated in life! It still is today! Human unity operates through the instrumentality of the gospel, or it doesn’t operate at all!

1:21-23 Because The Gospel is Reportable: The gospel is real. It is history. It is not theoretical or ephemeral. Human beings make theories. God does things in history and in reality. God was wise enough to give men the freedom to theorize if they choose. In this freedom God is able to demonstrate vividly the finitude of man. Since man without God is able only to theorize he should acknowledge his limitations. Man should welcome an Absolute Being with absolute wisdom—especially since such a Being has revealed Himself in history. When God decided that man’s inability to redeem himself had been

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sufficiently established in the demonstration of the foolishness of human theories, the Son of God was sent to the world to establish historically and experientially the absolute wisdom of God.

The KJV translation of verse 21 is unfortunate. Paul is *not* saying that preaching is foolishness, or that the world will be saved by the foolishness of preaching. Many people preach. Politicians preach; philosophers and moralists preach; terrorists and anarchists preach, so it is not the methodology of preaching that the world calls "foolish." The RSV is much clearer when it translates, ". . . through the folly of *what* we preach to save. . . ." The world calls the Christian *message*, the gospel of the cross, foolish. But, clearly, it is the message of the gospel that saves human beings from lawlessness and wickedness. The Greek phrase, *tou kerugmatos* clearly intends the reader to understand that it is the *thing* preached (the message) which the world calls foolish. But that message is of the accomplished redemption of Christ and God has chosen to save through it. This redemption was wrought upon the cross and verified by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Its proclamation and acceptance saves men unto the glorious destiny for which God created them. T. R. Applebury wrote: "While the basic facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the gospel is not limited to these facts, for it takes the whole Bible to tell the whole story of the whole counsel of God about salvation through His Son. In the Old Testament it is seen in prophecy, promise, and type. In the New Testament it is seen in the facts of the life of Christ; in the history of conversion to Christ; in the explanation of the essentials of righteousness; in the application of the gospel to daily life; and, finally, in the prophecy of the victory of Christ and of those who accept His gospel." (*Studies in First and Second Corinthians*, by T. R. Applebury, p. 23, College Press, 1963). If the Christian message (*kerugmatos*) was *only* of a crucified, dead Messiah, it would be foolishness. Any claim to atone for the sins of the whole world by someone who had no power to conquer death would be an absurd, abortive claim. But the Christian message, authenticated by eyewitnesses, friends and enemies alike, is of a Messiah who conquered death. Therefore his claims of atonement are trustworthy and will transform or regenerate those who continue to believe him. God transforms the minds and personalities of sinners through the word of his Son's redemptive program, the gospel. But man must believe that. God created man with the capability to believe and respond to God's promises and commands. So Paul says, God was pleased to save men through the agency and instrumentality of his word. Paul uses the Greek present tense when he writes the word

believe (Gr. *pisteuontas*) indicating that those who are being saved (see comments, v. 18) are those who are *continuing* to believe.

While those continuing to believe the facts of the gospel are being saved, those continuing to demand signs and continuing to seek wisdom from some source other than the gospel are being lost! The Jews continually demanded signs. Paul uses the present tense Greek verb here, *aitousi*, indicating that the Jews were not satisfied with the signs Jesus gave of his Messiahship, but continued demanding them. Jesus called these Jews, "an evil and adulterous generation" for continually demanding signs (Matt. 12:38ff.) when sufficient signs were already promised (Jesus' miracles and his resurrection from the dead). God is not pleased with people who continually put him to the test, asking for signs, when sufficient signs have been given (cf. Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 14:22; Deut. 18:18-19; Luke 16:30-31). Elevating spiritual (miraculous) gifts above teaching and preaching the word "line upon line and precept upon precept" is a clear indication of spiritual immaturity (cf. Isa. 28:7-13; I Cor. 14:20ff.). The Jews were even demanding a sign from Jesus when he was hanging on the cross (Matt. 27:41-44). Jesus pronounced condemnation on whole cities (cf. Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 10:1-20) for demanding signs and then not repenting when many signs were done. It is not one's proximity to supernatural demonstrations or even persons which saves, but faith in the deity and divine work of Jesus. Jesus said some at the judgment would claim proximity to his fleshly presence as merit for salvation (cf. Luke 13:22-30) but to no avail. It is not the possession of supernatural gifts which signified the salvation of the Christians at Corinth (for they came behind no other in such gifts). That which saves is faith in the reportable, reliable redemptive work of Christ on the cross and at the empty tomb. Without the word being preached there can be no faith (Rom. 10:17); without the "seed" (Word) being sown, there can be no fruit produced (Luke 8:11ff.).

1:24-25 Because the Gospel is Reliable: Unity operates through the instrumentality of the Gospel because the Gospel is the only source of power available to man to break down barriers of racial, cultural, and religious divisions. It is reliable *first*, of course, because it is authenticated by miracles and signs and fulfilled prophecies (Heb. 2:3-4). But the world should now acknowledge its reliability because it has been demonstrated through 2000 years as the only workable instrument of true spiritual unity for the human race. Producing human spiritual unity in love and peace through universal human philosophy, culture and government was tried for 700 years by four successive world empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome). That

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did not produce! In fact, it produced the opposite—slavery, hatred, war and wickedness. Only the righteousness of God in the redemptive work of Christ (which the world calls “foolishness”) is powerful enough to effect the unity of the human race under the constraints of love, peace, justice and righteousness. That is what is taking place in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ because that is where redemption is made available. The church, dwelling place of the living word of God, is the living organism in the world, kept alive by God’s Spirit, where men may be redeemed. The church is the only place where men do not lift up sword against one another and where they learn war against one another no more. In the world are the lawless. For them only a superficial form of unity and temporary restraint against wickedness is maintained by enforcement of law (cf. I Tim. 1:8-11; Rom. 13:1-7). But for the citizen of God’s kingdom, all arbitration is done peaceably and with love by the power of the Spirit of Christ in their minds and hearts (cf. Col. 3:1-24).

The Gospel is the only reliable dynamic for bringing about spiritual oneness between man and God and man and man. Christ proved it by the supernatural verification of his redemptive plan; history had proven it by experience. It is imperative that all those who profess to be followers of Christ focus all their energies to the proclamation of that message.

Unity Occasions Glory to God Alone (1:26-31)

26 For consider your call, brethren, not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many of noble birth; 27but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, 28God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; 31therefore, as it is written, “Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord.”

1:26 Their deficiency: The very fact that there existed in Corinth a body of believers, immature and struggling, but united in the love and peace of Christ, proved that whatever unity they had achieved was to be credited to God the Father and Christ the son, for there was no other such body of human beings in Corinth like them. The

philosophers and politicians had not produced such a fellowship. These Christians certainly had not come to their fellowship through wisdom according to worldly standards. Paul reminds them to *take a look at* (Gr. *blepete*, see, look) their condition at the time they answered the call to the Gospel. Not many of them were *sophisticates* (Gr. *sophoi*, wise) as judged by *worldly* (Gr. *sarka*, fleshly, human) standards. Not many were *powerful* as the world would estimate power; nor were many of *noble birth* (Gr. *eugeneis*, well-born).

God actually chose what the sophisticates, the powerful and the nobility would call "foolishness" to form a society in Corinth of loving, caring, righteous-living people. They were called Christians. This put all the philosophies and other human attempts of man to create his own Utopia, by his own wisdom, to shame. The faith and righteousness of Christians became, as it were, a condemnation of all the humanism of their society, just as Noah's obedience to God thousands of years earlier (cf. Heb. 11:7).

The apostle's enunciation of the former lack of worldly prestige of these Corinthians is mild compared to his reminder of what a few others had been before becoming Christians (cf. I Cor. 6:9-11). The gospel not only has the power to create a kingdom of love and peace and goodness out of the unsophisticated and powerless people of the world, it also has divine power to bring into this same kingdom, by conversion, people who were formerly the dregs of humanity. Its power is operative, however, only when human beings acknowledge they have no sufficiency in anything that is human and surrender to the revelation of God's redemptive plan for their lives.

1:27-28 Their dynamic: When one considers the tools God chose to use in his redemptive program and the end result he produced, one must admit divine power as the source. God chose what the world, in all its accumulated expertise, calls "foolishness" (Gr. *mora*, moronic, stupid), to demonstrably put to shame the sophistication of worldly-wisdom. The world, with all its science, philosophy and psychology has never done what the gospel has done. God chose the *weak* things (Gr. *asthene*, no strength, sick, impotent) in order to expose the shame of what the world calls strong and powerful. The world calls the vicarious atonement of Christ "sick." But the change wrought in the lives of those who believe Christ proves that the world is wrong in what it depends on for power.

God chose to use what the world calls "low" and "despised" (Gr. *agene*, inconsequential, unknown; and *exouthenemena*, contemptible, rejected) to *abolish* (Gr. *katargese*, nullify, destroy) the things which the world in rebellion against God considers effective. Paul is not

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the first God uses to reveal this. The Old Testament Prophets warned their people that God was going to accomplish man's redemption by a despised and rejected Messiah, one in whom was no "comeliness" and who would not be "esteemed" (cf. Isa. 52:13—53:12). Jesus warned in his parables that the kingdom would start as small and insignificantly as a "mustard seed" but would grow to be huge (Matt. 13:31-32). Righteousness, love, self-control, humility and faith are things the world calls weaknesses. Wealth, fame, self-sufficiency, political position and skepticism are things the world calls powerful. God has demonstrated his sovereign wisdom by putting everything the world calls powerful to shame through the power of the redemptive work of Christ. Only the gospel of Christ produces the society of people transformed into loving, hoping, trustworthy, faithful, peaceful servants of God. Wealth, fame and political power all combined has never done it and never shall.

God chose the betrothed of a lowly Jewish carpenter as the mother for the Savior of the world. He decided this Savior was to be born in a cattle-shed. This Savior's friends would be harlots and hated publicans. He would select as his intimate co-workers fisherman, publicans and women. But these "low born" and "rejects" would, with the divine message of God's reconciling grace through the cross of Christ, turn the world "upside down" (cf. Acts 17:6) showing that philosophies of men were totally inadequate while the word of God changed people and society for the best.

It is through this word that human beings may be born again (cf. I Peter 1:22-25). Through these promises human beings may partake of the divine nature (II Peter 1:3-4). Through this, human beings receive power to be transformed and purified (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; I John 3:1-3). And the word of God is the *only* instrument chosen by God to accomplish this in the world. The world thinks otherwise because it has believed the devil's lie told in Eden (Gen. 3:1-7) that to trust, depend upon and obey God is weakness, while independence from and resistance to God brings power.

1:29-31 Their declaration: God deliberately gave salvation to mankind as a gift so that no human being might boast. He chose to effect man's salvation through what the world called weaknesses so that man would not be able to glorify himself or any of his finite schemes. Salvation is absolutely by faith in the redemptive deeds done by God in Christ—not by any merit of man. Salvation is appropriated (or accepted) by man's believing obedience to the covenant terms decreed by God in his New Testament. But man, by accepting salvation, never

merits it. His sins were paid for by Christ's death—finally and completely. When finite and sinful man compares himself with other finite and sinful men, he is inclined to find someone who, in his estimation, is worse than himself. He then resolves to trust in his own self-righteousness and his own glory, (cf. II Cor. 10:12). But when man, by belief in the divine record (the Bible) honestly compares himself with the infinite and absolutely righteous God (and his Son), he finds nothing in himself to trust—not even his own feelings (Jer. 17:5-10, esp. v. 9, 10; Mark 7:21-23; Eph. 4:22; Eccl. 9:3; Isa. 6:5). Jeremiah, tempted to follow his own feelings and desires, surrendered to the word of God burning in his “bones” (cf. Jer. 20:7-12), and preached to turn man's trust in the Lord.

The KJV is nearer a literal translation of the Greek text in verse 30. The Greek phrase is: *ex autou de humeis este en Christo Iesou*. Literally that would be translated: *but out from him you are in Christ Jesus*. The RSV gives the meaning in its translation: “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus. . . .” Christ is the *source* of our salvation because he *became* (Gr. *egenethe*, 3rd aorist, sing. passive—he was both *made* and willingly *became*) our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. God was in Christ on the cross, reconciling the world to himself. God decreed (made) Christ to be sin for us and righteousness for us (cf. II Cor. 5:11-21). At the same time, Christ, the Son, willingly became sin for us (Heb. 10:5-10). God decided on the substitutionary atonement by his Anointed One from the foundation of the world (cf. I Peter 1:19-20; Isa. 53:1-12, etc.). The Son of man knew he had come into the world as a vicarious *ransom* for the sins of the whole world (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). He knew that it was only by his perfect sacrifice men would be able to be set apart (sanctified) to God (cf. Heb. 10:5-10; John 17:13-26). Christ is the *source* of our sanctification. We could never be good enough on our own to be set apart unto God! If we are sanctified for God at all it is because we trust completely in the merit of Christ's perfect sacrifice. Of course, we must choose to accept his sanctification for us. And our choosing must conform to his revealed will. The same concepts apply to any claims we may have to *wisdom* or *redemption*. Christ alone is the source. We choose whether we want what he offers or not on his terms.

Verse 31 is a quotation of Jeremiah 9:24. Jeremiah faced the same problem with God's covenant people 600 years before Paul. Men basked in their own self-glory. The glory of other men was what they thought was the ultimate meaning of life (Jer. 9:23). As a result they conducted their lives on the bases of falsehood, hypocrisy, treachery, slander and deceit (Jer. 9:1ff.). But Jeremiah poured out his life in

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ministry of the Word to turn them to glorying in the Lord (Jer. 9:24) and in what the Lord determines is righteousness.

Paul wrote a great deal about “boasting” and “glorying” to the Corinthians. The Corinthians apparently assumed that anyone with the office of apostle would automatically be boastful, proud and arrogant. Paul did not behave like that (see I Cor. 3:18-23; 4:1-13; II Cor. 11:1-33; 12:1-21). Paul made it plain that Christians have nothing to boast about except the grace of God (Rom. 3:27-28; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 3:3-7; II Cor. 12:9). And who can boast in self when all one is or has or hopes to be is by the grace of Christ?

Since *all* Christians are thus joined and united to Christ by *grace alone*, such unity must give occasion to glorifying only Christ. Whatever results from the regenerative work going on in the church on earth, whether through spiritual leaders or those being led, it all redounds to God’s glory and not man’s. Man works, God gives the increase. Unless God gives the increase, there will be none of any value or permanence at all, no matter how hard and expertly man works.

APPREHENSION AND APPLICATION:

1. Why do you think the apostle Paul left his home country and wandered all over the Roman empire preaching Christ? Could anyone do that?
2. Would the city of Corinth, for its time, be comparable to a large American city? Could people be sanctified to God in New York? San Francisco? How?
3. What is a saint? Which work of grace sanctifies people?
4. Why does Christian unity have as its basis the character of God?
5. May Christians be united with those who impugn the character of God?
6. How important is God’s faithfulness to you? Could not all religious people unite without all believing in the absolute faithfulness of God?
7. What does the Bible mean by saying God is “One”?
8. Is it possible for all Christians to “be of the same mind” and “united in the same judgment”? *How*?
9. Why are the principles of interpreting human language so important to Christian unity?
10. Why do people divide the church over human leaders? Do leaders sometimes contribute to division? Why didn’t Paul?
11. Did Paul infer that baptism was unessential or unimportant? Why didn’t he baptize those he converted? Who is authorized to baptize people?

12. What is the instrument with power sufficient to unite all men in God?
13. What is a revelation? Why must we accept the atonement of Christ for our sins as a revelation?
14. Why is the acceptance of revelation necessary to Christian unity?
15. What has the historicity of the gospel to do with unity? Should Christians seek unity with those who deny the historicity of the Bible? On what basis?
16. Is preaching foolishness? Why does the world consider the cross foolish?
17. Is there anything wrong in seeking signs? Is there too much of that today?
18. Can there be faith without the Word of God being preached? In what?
19. In what two ways may we prove the Word of God is reliable to produce Christian unity? Have you discussed this with other believers lately?
20. Should Christians keep reminding themselves of what they were before being saved? What has that to do with unity in Christ?
21. Do Christians have anything about which they may boast? Nothing at all? Why not?