

“Come Together”

January 26, 2014

I Corinthians 1:10-18

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

2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

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

Thanksgiving

4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Church Divided Over Leaders

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,[a] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas[b]”; still another, “I follow Christ.”

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Christ Crucified Is God’s Power and Wisdom

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

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”[c]*

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”[d]

Footnotes:

a.1 Corinthians 1:10 The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God’s family; also in verses 11 and 26; and in 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 6:8; 7:24, 29; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6, 20, 26, 39; 15:1, 6, 50, 58; 16:15, 20.

b.1 Corinthians 1:12 That is, Peter

c.1 Corinthians 1:19 Isaiah 29:14

d.1 Corinthians 1:31 Jer. 9:24

Video clip. Avicii “Wake Me Up” lyrics. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y_KJAg8bHI)

Part of why I chose this particular song is because it speaks to every generation. At least in the lyrics I will acknowledge that the music itself is decidedly of the techno bent. However I have listened to this song over and over again as I have dwelled on this scripture and I believe it speaks truth about the intergenerational nature of the church. If you are not aware, the church is by definition intergenerational. It is a body of believers who come from all ages and stages of life who come together in one place to worship and experience God together.

Let us do a quick survey please stand and stay standing if you have great grandchildren, please stand if you have grandchildren, please stand if you have nieces, nephews or children of your own. Stand if you are child of God. We all have a place do we not in the church? We were not all the same age as others who stood when we did. We cover a variety of people and brackets of life, we are intergenerational.

This is a profound acknowledgement when it comes to how we come together as a body of believers. Paul is asking us in the verses we have heard to be of one mind and one spirit together. It is a difficult concept that Paul asks of us in the church. Life and experience teach us each different things as we are living our lives for God. I am sure if we reflect a bit on it we all have instances where we feel as if those older than ourselves are telling us we are lost when it comes to the direction we are headed but as we think on it and consider it we did not know we were lost at all but rather thought we were heading towards something amazing. Sometimes it would be easier in a lot of ways to allow the voices of the older members to hold sway or the voices of the energetic members to take over but that is not what we are called to do as we come together as a body of intergenerational believers.

Paul lays it out that the people of Corinth are quarrelling amongst themselves for where they need to head as a church, with what they need to believe. Paul calls them to come together.

So how do we do that? How do we seriously take what this scripture is saying and use it and apply it and live it to the best of our abilities. How can we be completely humble and gentle; patient, and loving to one another and come together as a body of believer’s?

We get over ourselves. Yup, we forget about our own selfish desires and ambitions and instead we think about the people around us. Not an easy thing to do. But actively putting aside ourselves is a necessary action we should strive to do in all of our attempts to live a life worthy of our calling.

What this scripture is asking of us is not an easy concept in any way shape or form. We are human beings and we want what we want, when we want and how we want. We often forget that our Christian identity is not a Sunday only identity. It is not made by our parents’, by the people who we know, it is not made by anyone but ourselves. It is only

you or I who can act like a member of the body when we are in and out of the spotlight. It is only your or I who can act when we have the power and authority to influence others. It is only how we act when we lead and how we act when we have the opportunity to follow. Our Christian identity is built on how we act at all times and in all situations.

This scripture asks us to keep the unity of the spirit. How do we create those bonds of peace with one another? Any of us who are married or in any kind of a relationship should relate to how often you do things you do not want to do just because the person you love wants to do the activity. We easily do this on the microcosmic levels of spouses, families, and children. We have no problem saying the words but a harder problem acting as if this church and this community are a family.

We don't get over ourselves. We still act and think and relate to one another as if the 'I' in family is the most important letter in the word and even the entire alphabet. Now maybe that is a little bit harsh because we do have our moments and our times when we make this scripture a reality. But we need to have a plan and an idea for the goals and the structure and be willing to change and grow together to make this family work.

Marriages do not last on love alone; they last because of communication and the efforts of both parties, giving and taking, setting goals and relating to one another to make sure all are on the same page. Being a church family is a similar idea. It takes work and time and effort, it takes leaders and followers. And it takes loving one another regardless of what we have done or do and this scripture talks about the different positions we are given and how they are all important to being one body of believers that could be under the name of a family.

In seminary I have learned a lot and one of the biggest lessons on church development and key to church survival is using what you have. I accepted in choosing a position of service that I most likely will not be wealthy and will have to constantly deal with running things through the board and through the finance committee before making any purchases for the church. It can be such a pain that I have begun to be creative in using little things and keeping a financial peace worthy budget. I also have learned very much to rely on people as a resource. Sometimes we think that in a church the only types of resources needed are money and time to serve. We forget about all the other aspects of church life that keep us going.

We have pastors and lay ministers and secretaries and budgets, we have building and maintenance and yard work all the things that need to be done at a house to make it a home need to be done to any church families home. But it can be hard to keep things going when one part tries to take over or one part tries to be so completely in charge that little else gets done. The scripture tells us how we all have different positions that are important to one another to keep this body together working in unity for the common goal of sharing God's love.

One of the biggest refrains I learned growing up is that we are all by being Christians called to be ministers. Regardless of the job that pays us, and some like myself have felt the call into full time ministry as pastors or missionaries, we all have gifts and talents that come together to make this body a functioning and productive body. We all have the responsibility to as Ephesians 5:21 says serve one another out of reverence for Christ. We enact that sense of service in humility and in love.

We get over our pasts to live in the present so that we can become the future. We are a family who forgives and forgets and moves on striving to love one another and serve one another and be accepting of where we came from and what we do.