

Church Fights (Part 1) – 1 Cor 1:10-17

1 Cor 1:10-17; (Intro)

If you've been around church-world for any length of time, it's likely you've at least observed a church fight; Not *between* churches, but within one
Maybe you're even a casualty of one, or the cause of one
If so, I trust you've long since repented and reconciled

Whatever the case, if I were to ask for a show of hands, I'm pretty sure that most of you have at least been exposed to something like that . . .
Where a big brew-ha-ha went down, taking part or all of the church with it
It happens all the time – and it's painful, shocking, and shameful

And though we haven't experienced such a thing here, I'm embarrassed to admit its frequency in other places
To admit that so many churches, and so many people in them, have stooped so low as to actually *fight* amongst themselves
To actually sacrifice the reputation of the church and the name of Jesus, b/c people wouldn't humble themselves, or confess their sin, or give way for the sake of unity

- What's *worse*, are the ridiculous lengths to which some fights go, and the pathetic stories that come out of them
We were talking in our elder's meeting about it this week, and Bob Brueggem, our EP, related one story he heard . . .
About an arbitrator that was called in to essentially referee a deacon board discussion, and had to bring the police with him to keep the peace
Or another instance where he heard of a board member who had his sons beat the pastor up in order to get what he wanted; Shameful
- And how many of you have been a part of “worship wars?”
“If you're not going to play the music I like, and my grandma liked, and my 24th great grandfather liked . . .”
“I'm gonna take my ball and bat and go somewhere else – but not before I beat you over the head with it”

Pathetic; As is the case with most church fights . . .
Where somebody gets a burr in their saddle, and the battle's on

Fighting may be the norm in the world, but it should *never* occur in the church
Few things weaken it more, and undermine its testimony . . .
Leaving the bride of Christ, the church, in shambles

Which makes church fights an issue

They're an issue (v10-17)

That's the first thing I want you to notice in this passage
They're an issue now, and they were an issue then

And to help you see it, I'm going to read the passage through, and then go back and flesh out the meaning/facts, before we move on to the application
And let me just say that this is going to be a two-part message
We'll cover side one of your notes this week, and side two next week; 1 Cor 1:10-17

10 – *brothers* – could be men only, or men and women, depending on the context
In this case, it's both, b/c he's addressing the church, and specifically addresses women as part of it, later on

10 – *By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* – IOW the basis of his appeal is the authority of Christ, represented by his name; he pulls out all the stops
Divisions – means tears or cracks; as in tears in the fabric of their fellowship

10 – *United in the same mind* means to have the same outlook on things, the same attitude, moving in the same direction
And the same judgment – referring to unified decisions, even at the expense of your own rights or desires; that's the connotation of the phrase *same judgment*

Paul's not looking for clones – who look, think, and act the same . . .
But voluntary, other-oriented unity, for the good of the whole; for the sake of the gospel

Bottom line – since they're called into the fellowship of Christ (v9), as one body, they should act like it

11 – *Chloe's people* were most likely business agents or slaves who traveled back and forth between Ephesus, where Paul was writing, and Corinth
Evidently, they were part of the church in one of those cities, and gave Paul a bad report about the one in Corinth

12 – they were claiming spiritual superiority over one another due to their personal attachment and allegiance to the different leaders who had influenced them
And it divided them

Some were following *Apollos*, who succeeded Paul as the pastor in Corinth, and was no slouch himself
In fact, Acts 18:24 says that – *He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures*.
Probably even well-educated, having come from Alexandria, which was a center of academic scholarship in those days

And then there was *Peter* – the recognized leader of the apostles
Who could have visited Corinth, but most likely had followers from afar, just b/c of his reputation
Kind of like radio pastors do today

And then some followed *Paul* – who was no doubt well-loved, having started the church in the first place, and led many of them to the Lord along the way

3 great leaders, who some people obviously elevated to near mythical status, and claimed spiritual superiority b/c of their allegiance to them

- And then, to cap it all off, there were those who, in their own attempt to rise above the rest, fell into their *own* brand of spiritual elitism . . .
By claiming that they followed *Christ*
As if the others weren't; As if they had an exclusive lock on him

And Paul responds by saying in v13 – *Is Christ divided?*

Is Christ apportioned out to some and not others? Obviously not

He died for all, and all those who are saved have all of him, all the time

13 – *Was Paul crucified for you?*

Did *he* die in your place, for your sins? Did he forgive you? Obviously not

13 – *Were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

IOW was he the one you proclaimed as Savior and Lord in the waters of baptism?

Was he the one to whom you publicly declared your allegiance when u were baptized?

No, no, and no; It was Jesus

3 questions, the obvious answers to which, are *no*

Not only b/c of their absurd nature and rhetorical format, but b/c of a special part of speech in the Greek sentence structure, that demands it

14-15; *Crispus* was the Jewish synagogue ruler mentioned in Acts 18:8, who believed in the Lord with his entire household . . .

And *Gaius* was a trusted friend, with whom Paul stayed a few years later in Corinth, when he wrote his letter to the church in Rome (Rom 16:23)

And when you put them together with the household of *Stephanas*, who he mentions in v16 – it’s likely that they were all *early* converts . . .

Baptized by Paul out of necessity, b/c he was the only leader at the time (16)

- Now, some might look at this verse and conclude that Paul couldn’t have been under the inspiration of the HS – due to his forgetfulness and uncertainty
At first, he forgets that he baptized Stephanas; And then he’s not sure if that’s it

But instead of being an indictment *against* the infallible inspiration of Scripture, I think this verse actually *confirms* it

I think it *confirms* the accuracy and truth of God’s word, by revealing that the HS brought back to mind, things that Paul had long since forgotten . . .

In order to protect the Scriptures from errors and falsehoods, that Paul might otherwise have penned, were he writing on his own

- So the flow of thought from v14 goes like this (14-17; skip v16) . . .
Paul’s role was not to create a cult following for himself
His role was to preach the gospel and call men and women to follow *Christ*

Nor was he called to preach it with smooth talk or worldly wisdom

Otherwise, people might be prone to place their trust in *him* and his *speech*, rather than *Christ* and the *cross*

The church in Corinth was embroiled in a fight – a church fight

As serious an issue then, as it is today

And one that reveals all *kinds* of ugly things, when you peel back the layers

That’s the second major point I want you to see – church fights are an issue, and . . .

They’re revealing (v11)

Whether you want them to be or not

Like when Chloe’s people reported to Paul about the quarreling in Corinth . . .

It was like a light bulb suddenly being turned on in a dark room, revealing the cockroaches of dissension, that up to that point, were comfortably hidden

That’s usually how church fights happen don’t they? They start in the dark

The darkness of closed hearts, and closed rooms

Until they’re *revealed* by the light, the truth

And it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to detect them – it’s kind of obvious; you feel it

The point is – church fights are revealing, whether you want **them to be, or not**

- **Revealing** of things like *spiritual arrogance*

It’s rarely said, and almost never admitted, but sometimes church fights come down to some people thinking they’re more spiritual than others

“I’m not sure who you follow, but I follow *Christ*”

“And if you were as spiritual as me, you’d understand”

Have you ever gotten that impression from somebody?

“I’m glad you listen to the pastor and all – that’s really good”

“But I’m kind of past that – I listen to *Jesus*; And maybe someday you will too”

Sicken-ly arrogant

And every single one of us needs to seriously consider whether we *think* that way, or have any shred of that kind of attitude

All the more so before it’s revealed by **a church fight**

- **And then there’s** *spiritual favoritism*

Church fights reveal all kinds of things, whether you want them to or not

Including spiritual arrogance, and spiritual favoritism

Where people think – “my guy is Paul, or my guy’s Apollos”

“Or mine’s Garth, or Bob, or John”

“And I don’t really care about anyone else, b/c they speak my language; they know me”

And so it goes, where picking favorites often leads to choosing sides

All of which is *rarely* revealed, until a fight breaks out and it’s too late

- Having said that, it’s not wrong to have a special place in your heart for the person who led you to Christ, or the pastor who feeds you the Word
Or the youth leader who speaks your language
Or the SG leader who’s been there for you
There’s nothing wrong with that

But that affection becomes misguided when it causes you to think less of *other* leaders, and diminishes your desire to *follow* them

When that happens, you’re at risk of causing a **church fight**

Spiritual arrogance, spiritual favoritism

- **And then there’s** just plain *foolishness* that’s revealed by church fights

Foolishness like acting as if a mere man is your Savior, instead of Christ (13)
Or foolishness like making a big deal over who baptized you – as if one pastor’s plunge
is more spiritual than another’s
Granted, some are more aggressive than others, but none are more sanctified

And I know people don’t really *say* that, but that’s how they *act* sometimes
And it’s foolishness; Rarely revealed until a **fight breaks out**

- **Elitism, arrogance**, favoritism, and foolishness – all issues revealed by church fights
The problem is, those of you who are most susceptible to such things . . .
Most prone to nitpick over non-essentials; Most likely to pick a fight . . .
Don’t think *any* of this, has *anything* to do with you
You’re clueless that your personality, or your bent, lends itself to church fights

So just in case that’s you, let me give you a few indicators by which to assess yourself
1. If you’re sitting there thinking, “Well, there’s obviously no room for feedback around
here with a little dictator up front” . . .
If you’re thinking that, or you’ve thought that before – you’re prone to church fights

There’s *plenty* of room around here for feedback and input – and we welcome it, b/c we’re
in this together
But if you’re a nitpicking nanny, about every little thing, especially peripheral things . . .
Then you’re exactly right – there’s *very* little tolerance for your input
That’s indicator #1

Indicator #2 is that . . .

2. If you listen for what’s wrong with the message, more than you listen for what’s right,
you’re prone to church fights
If your favorite passage is Acts 17 where the Bereans measured Paul’s words against the
Scriptures – you’re prone to church fights
If you listen to critique, instead of listening for what you can apply – you’re prone to
church fights
3. If you crave attention for all the things you do around here – you’re prone to church
fights
And it’s just a matter of time before the meltdown

4. If you complain more than you compliment – you’re prone to church fights

4 indicators by which to assess yourself and your tendencies
And if they fit, don’t go there (**Summary**)
Guard your heart . . .
And let the love of God, and the glory of Christ, and the impulse of the Spirit *transform*
your thoughts and *control* your words . . .
So that a church fight never reveals them

Anything else leaves the bride of Christ **in shambles**