

1. Conflict Arises When We Take Our Eyes Off of Christ and Place Them on Something Else
 - a. Conflict tears apart something that was made and is made to be one
 - i. "Tearing" is the word chosen by Paul to describe the outcome of such conflicts
 1. It is the word "*schisma*" from which we get the word "schism"
 2. Tearing the fabric of the Church into pieces, which belongs to God, and has been sanctified for His purpose, and called into fellowship with Christ Jesus, is incongruous with the gospel of the Cross of Christ as God's power to build it
 - ii. "Quarreling" (v11) is only used in a negative sense in the Scriptures
 1. It in the "deeds of the flesh" lists (Rom 13:13; Gal 5:20)
 2. It is one of the characteristics listed that reveals one doesn't belong to Christ and will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal 5:20; 1 Cor 3:3; 1 Tim 6:4)
 - b. The Church has a conflict problem
 - i. 8/10 churches are undergoing some kind of conflict at any given time
 - ii. There are entire organizations (Peacemakers, etc.) built around dealing with conflict in the church
 - iii. These conflicts are of various types
 1. Doctrinal
 2. Interpersonal
 3. Party factions based upon personalities
 4. Philosophical
 - iv. These conflicts come about for various reasons, none of which are trusting in the Cross of Christ as the power of God by all parties involved (humble hopeful result)
 1. Miscommunication
 2. Some people just love conflict (Titus 3:10-1)
 3. Opinions on small matters become ultimate matters
 4. Some conflicts are necessary because there is not true unity of the faith
 - a. Romans 16:17 - I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.
 - b. Titus 1:9-11 - "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach."
 - c. Titus 3:10 - "As for the person who stirs up division, after warning him once, then twice, then have nothing to do with him."
 - c. The problem in Corinth seemed to be division based upon ministry style, particularly verbiage and words
 - i. "I am of Paul" - "We follow the founder of this church. He emphasizes the cross."
 1. This is like the party of those who follow and bear strong allegiance to the founding individual or family of a church
 2. They will claim this relationship as the foundation for their "rightness"
 3. They believe that their allegiance to the messenger (apostle) is the power of God for holiness and transformation, rather than the message.
 - ii. "I am of Apollos" - "We love wisdom and excellence in teaching. We want the meat, and think that Apollos is brilliant and eloquent."

1. This is not to say that Apollos was privy to, nor party to, such schismatic divisions
2. This is like the party who looks down on those who don't love intellectual wrestling or "meaty" and eloquent preaching, because they believe the intellectual and extravagant preaching to be the power of God.
3. They will claim that they are wise because they don't settle for the simplicity of others' teaching (even the simplicity of the cross?)
- iii. "I am of Cephas" – "We have the pure religion because it is rooted in the Jewishness and traditions of the Old Testament."
 1. This group is like the party of those who cling to the traditions of the people of God before in form, and believe this tradition to be the power of God
- iv. "I am of Christ" – "We don't follow any human leadership. Christ speaks to us particularly and this is the power of God."
 1. This is the group who submits to no church authority, nor even desires to acknowledge it.
 2. They cling to the "just me and Jesus" and thus don't listen to any apostle or preacher or teacher, and their functional authority is not Christ, but their own inner feelings
- d. These factions were not started by the individuals, nor supported by them.
 - i. Paul speaks highly of both Peter and Apollos, and surely of Christ!
- e. It wasn't so much that each one may prefer the ministry of the individual named, but rather that they rejected the others out of hand
 - i. "We follow Paul, not Apollos or Peter."

2. There is an Appeal to Unity Based Upon the Gospel

- a. Unity Under One Lord
 - i. Paul begins his admonition with this foundation: "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"
 1. So much conflict is rooted in the desire to be right, the functional lordship of our own person or argument
 2. "Jesus is Lord" and "I am his servant" has a tendency to destroy such power grabbing
 - ii. His appeal comes according to, based upon, and through the agency of, the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ
 - iii. Thus, he is emphasizing that all unity must come under submission to Jesus Christ
 1. The only authority that Paul has, or Apollos has, or Peter has, is that of an emissary
 2. Therefore, it is the message of the Lord that unifies
- b. Unity as One Family in Christ
 - i. He calls them "my brothers"
 - ii. He doesn't set himself apart as one who rules over them, or is greater than them, but as one of them
 - iii. This familial language is important
 1. It involves belonging to one Father
 - a. Love and service
 2. It involves obligation to one Family
 - a. Love and service
- c. Unity of One Message

- i. Paul appeals to them so that they may all “speak the same” (agree)
 1. The cause of unity is the speaking of the same message – the gospel of Christ
 - a. Why “speak”?
 - b. Because speaking the same has to do with central doctrines, i.e. “who was crucified for you?” “Into whose name were you baptized?”
 - i. The Cross of Christ is the power of God – doctrine
 - ii. The Throne of Christ (Lord) – doctrine
 2. The pattern of our unity is centered on the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - a. Which Paul, Apollos, and Peter had in common
 - i. 1 Cor 15:3-11
 - ii. Galatians 1:8 – “another gospel is no gospel and whomever preaches it should be cut off”
 1. Thus, there *ought* to be disunity if the gospel isn’t the same
 2. However, if the gospel is the same, and our unity is found in what we confess to be true, then nothing else should divide us
 - b. They “spoke the same doctrine of Christ” – even if they did so in different contexts and in different manners
 - i. Thus, this is the unity which binds all of us together: the content of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - ii. To divide on anything other than this is to destroy the church of God (tear in pieces what should be one)
 - c. The Church is to be unified as to what we believe and what we proclaim
 - i. “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. (2Ti 1:13 ESV)
 3. The Gospel will divide, but it ought not divide the Church
 - a. The world hates it; it is foolishness (moronic) to them
 - i. The cross is weakness, and that is foolishness to the world
 - ii. The cross as necessary means that we cannot discover our way to God, to life, to redemption, but that we are powerless and must be bought
 1. This is offensive to the world, stupid, moronic
 - b. It is important to note that Unity is not a primary virtue, but a contingent virtue
 - i. What I mean by this is that unity is not the highest goal, but is contingent upon shared confession of the Truth
 - ii. Truth is the highest goal, as defined by the Gospel, and unity is subservient to it
 1. If there is not agreement on Gospel, there is not unity
 2. But we should not seek to force unity where there is no agreement on Gospel, as if unity, in itself, were somehow more virtuous than gospel Truth
 - c. There is external pressure today to eliminate distinction and exclusive doctrine under the term “unity” until we functionally believe nothing
 - i. A theological salad bar, where one chooses a little of this and a little of that, is not unity, but entropy
 - d. The Gospel of Jesus Christ makes some very strong divisive claims:

- i. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Act 4:12 ESV)
 - ii. “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Joh 14:6 ESV)
 - iii. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1Jo 5:12 ESV)
 - iv. “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Mat 7:22-23 ESV)
 - e. The major evil in our culture is that there is a moral, metaphysical, and total authority who judges us and an absolute Truth to which we must submit, and His name is Jesus Christ
 - ii. This agreement of sound doctrine results in one mind and one purpose
 - 1. Paul appeals that they may “speak the same’ *so that (purpose)* they might have the “same mind” and the “same purpose”
 - a. The gospel distinctives unify our thinking together and our working together
 - 2. In fact, the unity of the gospel “stitches together” (catharsis) the people of God into one Body
 - a. Thus, **we do not manage conflict, we must theologize it!**
3. Therefore, Unity is Built When We Place Our Eyes Upon Christ
 - a. The source of disunity is taking our eyes off of Jesus Christ crucified and placing them upon something else as our power or wisdom
 - i. Therefore, it follows that the solution for all disunity is not to find our lowest common denominator, but rather to fix our eyes upon Jesus
 - b. The apostle abruptly moves away from himself to place the focus on Christ Jesus and his gospel again by asking three rhetorical questions to be answered in the negative (NO!):
 - i. Is Christ apportioned out and handed to you all in pieces? **NO!**
 - 1. Though your relationships are disintegrated, He is not
 - a. Thus, as perfectly unified in Himself, He is the source and power to unify and restore our relationships, even when they are a mess
 - 2. The Cross levels us all equally, and in Him we are all equally reckoned dead and reckoned righteous
 - a. HE is our wisdom, holiness, and righteousness
 - b. No matter your race, wealth, gender, intellect, etc.
 - ii. Was Paul crucified for you? **NO!**
 - 1. Get your eyes off of me and place them on the only one necessary for your salvation – the crucified One!
 - a. If Paul was gone, the Church remains
 - b. If Jesus was gone, the Church is too
 - 2. We must beware *overvaluing* those whom we respect in the Church
 - a. You can honor them without allegiance to them in such a way
 - b. Like the doctor who delivered your baby
 - i. You will remember with honor the one who guided you through the birth, but the miracle was in the life, not the one catching it

- c. Don't confuse the messenger with the Hero and Author of the Message, no matter how faithful, particularly to disdain or diminish other messengers who carry the same message from the same Author
 - iii. Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **NO!**
 - 1. Paul uses himself as a negative example
 - a. There is something to be learned about leadership here
 - 2. We are not united with gospel ambassadors for salvation, but with the only one whose capable of paying down our debts (holy blood) and granting us life (holy redemption) through such union – Jesus Christ the Righteous
 - 3. "I came to proclaim the gospel!"
- c. Expecting anything else but the gospel of Christ crucified to make us wise, powerful, or strong makes the Cross of Christ meaningless and powerless to us
 - i. Paul did not try to unify the Corinthians on anything but the Cross of Christ as the power of God
 - 1. We will talk more about "wisdom words" vs. the Cross of Christ next week
 - ii. The Cross of Christ Jesus is about the Divine Rescue of powerless corrupt enemies by the gracious God over all Creation
 - 1. Every one of us was condemned by birthright and by actions, hating God and loving ourselves
 - 2. The Cross shows us both God's divine love for His enemies and God's holy wrath towards sin and evil
 - a. He loved us enough to send His Son to die to redeem us.
 - b. He hates sin enough that His Son *had* to come to redeem us.
 - c. The Cross proclaims our powerlessness and evil and God's great mercy and justice.
 - 3. As such, we have no power to stand upon except what God unilaterally expresses and accomplishes through His Son and by His Spirit
 - a. No wisdom will grant us strength to accomplish the redemption of the world
 - b. No words are capable of discovering any rescuer within our souls
 - c. Only the sheer grace of the Almighty God has the power to rescue us from condemnation and to restore all that is broken so that we can live to Him, the way we are supposed to be
 - iii. This gospel of powerlessness, self-death, and rescue from without is moronic to the world but unifies the Church
 - 1. The world sees itself as powerful, capable of rescue from within, loving self-discovery as its strength
 - 2. The gospel denies all of this and sees hope only in a single man, Jesus, the Jew from Nazareth, executed as a criminal, risen from the dead, seated in the heavenlies over all rule and authority
 - 3. United we proclaim Him to be the power of God for salvation in every way and make our appeal to the world: be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ!