

Lesson 2: 1 Corinthians 1:1-12

1 Corinthians 1:1-17 Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, ² Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: ³ Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; ⁵ That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge; ⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: ⁷ So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁸ Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. ¹³ Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; ¹⁵ Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. ¹⁶ And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. ¹⁷ For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Verse 1

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

Verse 1 tells us that Paul was called by God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. "Paul was called out of the world to be sent to the world."

- The call of God is a central theme in Paul's letters -- and particularly in this chapter.
 - 1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called...
 - 1 Corinthians 1:24 But unto them which are called ... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God...
 - 1 Corinthians 1:26 or ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:
- The Greek word "ekklesia" (translated "church") means "a company of those called out." All of those who hear the call of God and respond in obedience to that call are members of this "called out" company. God calls everyone to obey

the gospel, but only those who answer and obey the call become part of the called-out.

- The alternative is that God does not call everyone but calls only those who he knows will respond and who in fact are compelled to do so. This alternative leads to Calvinism, but is totally opposed to the word of God. (1 Timothy 2:4 "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.") God's call is universal, but not everyone answers that call.

Paul also makes it clear that he was called to be an apostle through the will of God.

- Paul will deal in this letter (and particularly in the second letter) with people who were questioning his apostolic authority. To the church that would often call his apostleship into question, Paul speaks of himself as a called apostle. But for all their doubts about his apostleship, Paul had none. He knew he spoke and acted with authority from God.
- Very often the first clue to someone in the church who is not operating according to the will of God is to watch how they deal with authority. Do they respect the authority of the Bible? Do they respect the authority of the elders? Do they respect the governmental authorities set up by God?

Paul very often mentions co-senders in his salutations. In Second Corinthians, for example, he mentions Timothy. In this book he mentions Sosthenes. Who was Sosthenes?

- Whoever he was, he must have been known to the Corinthians because he is identified only as "our brother."
- Some commentators suggest he is the scribe who wrote the letter while Paul dictated. And yet Tertius performed this same duty for the book of Romans (see Romans 16:22) and Tertius is not mentioned in the salutation of that book.
- Others have suggested that this Sosthenes is the same Sosthenes that is mentioned in Acts 18, and the name "Sosthenes" does not appear to have been commonly used, which supports this view.
 - In Acts 18:17, we learn that Sosthenes was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth. In verse 8 of that chapter, we learn that the previous ruler of the synagogue (Crispus) had become a believer, which explains why he lost his job.
 - The Jews in Corinth dragged Paul before the deputy, Gallio, and complained that Paul was breaking the law. Gallio responded that he

might be breaking Jewish law, but he was not breaking Gallio's law and he drove them from the judgment seat. Then the Greeks, for a reason not given but possibly because they were angered by the Jews' actions before Gallio, took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. (The word "Greeks" is missing from some early manuscripts, which may mean that Sosthenes was beaten by Jews rather than by Greeks -- perhaps because he too had become a Christian?)

- One other interesting theory is that Crispus and Sosthenes are one and the same person. The name Crispus can mean unsteady, and the name Sosthenes can mean steady. Paul might have changed Crispus' name to Sosthenes after he was saved. This would be similar to the play on words in Philemon 11 regarding the name of the slave Onesimus, which means profitable. ("Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me."). But that would not explain why Luke uses both names in Acts 18 and why Paul uses both names in 1 Corinthians 1.
- I think the best explanation is that Crispus and Sosthenes were each rulers of the synagogue in Corinth, and each was converted by the preaching of Paul.
- The inscriptional evidence suggests that the title "Ruler of the Synagogue" was an honorary title, bestowed on those who were wealthy patrons.
- The conversion to Christ of two leading officials in the Jewish community one after the other must have thrown them all into disarray.
- We can learn an important lesson from the conversion of Crispus and Sosthenes. We should proclaim the gospel to everyone -- no matter how entrenched they might appear to be in error. But what about the leader of the local mosque? What about that famous denominational preacher? What about that well known atheist? What about the Pope? They all need to obey the gospel, and we should not assume they will reject it. Imagine the effect it would have if they believed! Corinth experienced that same dramatic effect, not once, but twice! (Paul was the perfect example! He experienced a complete change in his life after his conversion to Christ, and perhaps Sosthenes and Crispus had known him before that big change. Perhaps the change they witnessed in Paul helped persuade them to obey the gospel as well.)
- Later Paul will say that he personally baptized Crispus and Gaius, presumably some of the very first converts in Corinth. In Romans 16:23 he will refer to Gaius as "the host to me and the whole church," which may mean that his house was large enough to accommodate the entire Corinthian church at that time. This would suggest that Gaius was (like Crispus) also wealthy and influential. This suggests that Paul had the

practical sense to recognize that while the gospel was offered to all, wealthy patrons made better assistants in the spread of the gospel (at least initially in a new town) than did slaves. This may explain why the first three converts by Paul may well have been Crispus, Gaius, and Sosthenes -- three wealthy, leading figures in the city.

Sosthenes is likely mentioned by Paul simply to let the Corinthian church know that he was in Ephesus with Paul and that he too sent his greetings.

Verse 2

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours

Notice that Paul does not refer to "my church" but to the "church of God."

- If anyone could have called the church in Corinth "my church" it would have been Paul. "He was as responsible for the birth and life of that church in Corinth as it is possible for any human to be" -- and yet it was God's church, not Paul's. The church here in Katy is not our church; it is the Lord's church, it is God's church.
- Paul may also have a subtle message here for certain members of the church at Corinth. The church, of course, did not have a building. Instead, the church met in members' homes. Since the church was large, it most likely met in a number of homes scattered about the city. These so-called house churches may have been the cause of some of the division that Paul is about to write about. Paul's early reference here to the church of God may have been a subtle caution to the patrons of the house churches that the church was not theirs. It did not belong to them just because it met in their house. And neither does the church today belong to those who contribute the most financially to keep the lights on and the mortgage paid -- the church belongs to God.

Paul reminds the church at Corinth that they are not alone; they have been called to be saints with all that in every place call upon the name of the Lord -- both theirs and ours. Again, he is giving them a subtle message. The remainder of the letter betrays that an attitude of superiority had crept into the church at Corinth and was destroying their unity. Paul is confronting their independent streak and their egotism by reminding them that they are not the only pebble on the beach. They do not possess Christ for themselves alone.

Before we leave this verse, we should note something important about the source of the words that Paul used here.

The Greek words used here for "saints" and "sanctified" are used in the Septuagint to refer to Israel as God's chosen people. Those words are used here to apply to the church as God's chosen people. Like Israel of old, the church is called to be set apart as God's special people; we are called to be different from the nations that surround us; we are called to be holy as he that called us is holy.

The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was originally written primarily in Hebrew. It was during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) that the Books of Moses were translated into Greek. Shortly afterwards the rest of the Old Testament was also translated. This translation was done by approximately 70 translators. Hence, the Septuagint is known by the letters LXX, the Roman numerals for seventy.

The New Testament writers use language from the Septuagint and quote from the Septuagint, which should lay to rest the question of whether we can have an accurate translation of the Bible. The Septuagint must have been an accurate translation of the Old Testament because it was quoted by the inspired writers of the New Testament.

Also, we can learn much from studying the Greek words in the Septuagint that are used in the New Testament. For example, the Greek word for "Lord" used to refer to God in the Old Testament is used in the New Testament to refer to Jesus, and that usage would immediately equate Jesus with God in the minds of its first century readers.

Verse 3

Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul refers to Jesus as Lord six times in the first nine verses. The people of Corinth had a reputation for recognizing no superior and no law but their own desires. And to people with this reputation, Paul repeatedly reminds them that Jesus is Lord.

Corinth was a Roman colony established to spread Roman ideology. By calling Jesus Lord, Paul subtly denies that title to Caesar.

But Corinth was also known for something else. The phrase "Corinthian girl" was used throughout Rome as a euphemism for prostitute. The word "Corinthianize" had come to mean to live with drunken and immoral debauchery. If a Corinthian was ever shown on stage in a Greek play, he was shown drunk. The city of Corinth was violent, wicked, corrupt, and decadent, and yet God sought its redemption. He poured out his grace and peace on former idolaters and homosexuals who had earned only the wrath of God, but who had responded to

the Paul's proclamation of the gospel. If any church should have understood the grace and peace of God, it was the church at Corinth.

Paul will later ask them, "What do you have that you weren't given?" The answer is nothing. God had brought them up from the depths of despair and depravity and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. **But** you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Verses 4-6

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; ⁵ That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; ⁶ Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:

The church at Corinth was a mess, and we are going to see just what a mess it was as we proceed with our study of these letters. But we should note something very important here in these introductory verses -- Paul looked the Corinthian church first as it was in Christ before he looked at anything else that was true about it.

If we read only these nine verses we would come away believing that the Corinthian church was a shining example and utterly spotless. But having read the rest of the letter we come away wondering how Paul could write these nine verses. These Christians smirked at immorality, they argued like children over "their" preachers, they despised and misused the gifts of God, they sued each other in pagan courts, and they argued in defense of fornication.

If the first nine verses of this letter were omitted, then it would be impossible for us to leave with anything but a pessimistic view of the church in Corinth. But Paul was not pessimistic. He was always thankful for the Corinthian church. These introductory verses are a vision not just for the church in Corinth but for the church everywhere.

It is easy to be pessimistic about the church today. Many once faithful congregations are not so today. Colleges set up and paid for by faithful Christians to educate their children have drifted far, far away from their charter. The pure and simple gospel of Christ is being perverted by those who once proclaimed it in truth. But with God on our side, how can we be pessimistic?

Christians must be optimists! Jesus gave himself for his church, and his church will be here to meet him in the air when he comes again. How can we be pessimistic when that is our future?

Paul is also thankful for the grace of God which was given to the church by Jesus Christ. "In giving us his son, God has given us all he has; he can give us no more; we have everything in him." Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Paul mentions two gifts in particular -- utterance and knowledge; logos and gnosis.

- He will deal with these spiritual gifts in much more detail later in the letter, and this mention in the introduction is a foreshadowing of much more to come.
- This is also almost certainly a reference to the false teaching of Gnosticism, which claimed to create a spiritual elite that alone possessed true knowledge.

Verse 6 tells us two very important facts about the preaching of Paul.

1. Paul's preaching was testimony about Christ. A gospel preacher must proclaim Christ: the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, and the return of Christ. All gospel preaching is Christ-centered preaching.
2. To be effective, preaching must be confirmed (literally "secured") in the lives of its hearers. Paul had preached Christ, and the Corinthian church had confirmed that preaching in their lives.

Paul mentions their speech and their knowledge, but he says nothing about their love or their work, unlike his introductions in the Philippian, Colossian, and Thessalonian letters. As we will soon see, both of these qualities seem to have been lacking in the church at Corinth.

And their utterance and knowledge were also lacking. Paul, for example, will ask them eleven times in this letter, "Do you not know?" He will tell them that they know only in part and see only dimly.

Verses 7-9

⁷ So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁸ Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we confirm or secure the testimony of Christ, verses 7-8 tell us that Christ will confirm or secure us unto the end, when he comes again to claim his own. The Bible never teaches the security of the unbeliever, but it does teach the security of the believer. We in the church are secure in Jesus Christ if we remain faithful until the end.

This letter will have much to tell us about the return of the Lord. As an aside, we sometimes refer to Christ's return as his "second coming" even though that phrase does not appear in the Bible. The closest we get to it is in Hebrews 9:28, where we read that Christ will appear a second time. The phrase "second coming" can lead to confusion because Christ has already had a figurative second coming, though of course he has not yet had a literal second coming. Matthew 24:27, for example, describes Christ's judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70 as a coming of Christ, and verse 34 tells us that that coming of Christ occurred in the first century. He came figuratively against Jerusalem when he judged that city. One day he will come literally to judge the world -- that will be his second appearance, but not his second coming.

God's faithfulness will extend to the day when Jesus returns and beyond throughout all eternity. He will keep his people blameless or guiltless in that day. Other translations have "unreprovable," "without reproach," "no condemnation," "vindicated," "faultless," and "free from accusation."

God will make sure that no charge or accusation is laid against his people, whether by men or by Satan, who Revelation 12:10 describes as the accuser of our brethren. On that day it will be plain to all that it is God who justifies -- and those who are justified will be glorified. (Romans 8:30)

And where do we enjoy this great blessing? In Christ. It is in Christ where we are free from condemnation. It is in Christ where we stand guiltless. It is in Christ where we are exempt from accusation. And how do we become in Christ? Galatians 3:27 ("For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.")

We can be faithless, but Christ cannot. 2 Timothy 2:12-13 ("If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.")

Verse 10

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

If you have been counting you will notice that Paul has used the name of Jesus 10 times in the first 10 verses. There is no doubt about Paul's focus, and about what he is going to tell the Corinthian church must be its focus.

As we are about to see, the Christians in Corinth were beginning to divide into groups. And Paul opens with a soft rebuke aimed at their lack of unity -- he reminds them in verse 10 that they are brethren; they are a family. He also told them this back in verse 1 when he referred to Sosthenes as "our brother."

Paul's appeal for unity in verse 10 centers around three phrases -- speaking the same thing, no divisions among you, and perfectly joined together.

The first phrase means literally "say the same thing" and it has been found on the headstone of a first-century married couple indicating that they worked together in a harmonious relationship and that they presented themselves as one voice to the outside world.

The phrase "perfectly joined" is the Greek word used to describe resetting a dislocated bone or mending a net. Paul wanted the divisions he was about to discuss to come back together into their former condition of unity. The same word is translated "restore" in Galatians 6:1 ("Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.")

The church is the body of Christ, and that comparison with a human body should tell us much about the unity that must be present in the church. All of the members of the body must operate with a common purpose and with a common will determined by the head of the body, which for the church is Jesus Christ. When our body fails to operate in that way, we know that something is seriously wrong, and the same is true of the church.

In John 17:23, Jesus prayed that we would be one so that "the world may know that thou hast sent me." If the church of Christ fails to speak the same thing, then it causes the world to doubt that Jesus was sent by God. A sectarian spirit in the church of Christ brings reproach upon Christ. We must never treat it lightly.

We should note that Paul's emphasis was on harmony rather than unison. Our worship in song is a good analogy. We sing as one, but we do not do so in dull unison. We sing in harmony -- singing the same song from the same sheet of music.

Certainly in matters of faith, there is no room for disagreement, but in matters of opinion there is freedom.

"In a word, were we to observe unity in essentials, liberty in incidentals, and in all things charity, our affairs would be certainly in a most happy situation." That was written not by Thomas or Alexander Campbell, but by Rupert Meldenius, the pseudonym of a German Lutheran theologian in the 1600's.

We should be careful that we do not elevate a list of essentials into some sort of creed that is separate from the Bible, but we must also be careful that we do not take an essential and start calling it a matter of opinion. The denominational mess we see around us today is a direct result of people taking liberties with essentials as well as with opinions.

Verses 11-12

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house of Chloe*, that there are contentions among you. ¹² Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

Paul had heard a report that there were contentions among the Corinthian Christians, and his response shows us just how painful that news was to Paul. We note that Paul was not reluctant at all to confront the problem.

This problem was very serious and Paul treated it that way. The Greek word for "contentions" in verse 11 is the same word he used in Galatians 5:20 (translated "variance") when he listed sins of the flesh in contrast to the fruit of the spirit. He had heard there were variances among them.

This report was delivered to Paul by the household of Chloe, and it is interesting that Paul names them. They did the right thing by telling Paul about what was happening in Corinth. It was not gossip. Instead, they went to the one in authority and told him about the threatened division. Again, there is a lesson in that for us. False teachers typically enter a congregation and start by taking small steps with small groups before they later begin to take big steps with big groups. If we see such a step away from the word of God -- perhaps in a class or in a devotional -- we should let the elders know. They have a tremendous responsibility and we do neither them nor ourselves any favors by keeping such information from them.

Chloe was likely a wealthy business woman in Corinth, and these from her household were likely slaves who had traveled to Ephesus (where Paul was writing the letter) on business. If they had been Chloe's children they would likely have been referred to by the household of their father, even if he had been deceased.

Why did Paul mention Chloe by name? One reason may be that Chloe's servants were not the only visitors Paul had from Corinth. In 16:17 we find that a delegation of three others (Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus) had been sent to see Paul from the Corinthian church. Perhaps they had not told Paul about these divisions, and Paul is indicating that he had to hear about the problems from someone else.

Paul mentions four divisions or cliques -- the Paul Party, the Apollos Party, the Cephas Party, and the Christ Party.

Commentators disagree on whether these divisions were caused by theological differences or by personality conflicts. In my experience, those two things always go together and always contribute to create division in the church. James 3:16 "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

One thing we should note, however, is that Paul was never in favor of unity when the gospel was at stake. He never compromised theological issues for the sake of unity. Later in this same letter he will state "there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you." (1 Corinthians 11:19) And to the Galatians he said, "if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:9)

One commentator has proposed that the divisions were rooted in the social situations of the members. The only other divisions that Paul specifically mentions in the letter center around litigation in chapter 6 and the Lord's supper in chapter 11, and both suggest tension between the rich and the poor.

The house churches we have already discussed are another possible cause of the division. Rivalries may have sprung up between these house churches and their various leaders. Paul, Apollos, and Peter may have been hosted by different house churches.

"A physically divided church tends almost inevitably to become a mentally divided church." You often here people today advocating a return to this house church model even when it means large buildings sit empty while the congregation splits up into small groups. If we follow the Corinthians' example, we should not be surprised if we experience the same divisions and cliques they experienced. The house church model is the perfect model for those who would love to divide and conquer. We should thank God every day that we have a building in which we can all meet together and worship.

• **The Paul Party**

The people in this group were possibly those who had been baptized in response to the preaching of Paul. They were the charter members of the church in Corinth, and they had all known Paul personally. Most likely they were Gentiles,

and they likely stressed the freedom that was in Christ as a reaction to those in another group that were trying to bind people to the law of Moses. Perhaps they were proud of their status as long time members of the church and looked down on more recent converts.

This group most likely emerged as a reaction to the others. Paul had been gone for several years now, and when these cliques began to form, some probably tried to correct the problem by forming a party of their own centered around the teaching they had originally received from Paul.

When the cliques emerged, this group was correct that a restoration was needed, but like the Protestants of today, they did not go back far enough. Instead, they formed their own little group centered not around Christ but around Paul.

The very last thing in the world that Paul wanted to do was create a Paulite. He had no word of approval for this group that was wearing his name. He condemned their division just as he did with the other groups.

• **The Apollos Party**

Acts 18-19 tells us that Apollos came from Alexandria in Egypt, which was probably the most respected university city of the Mediterranean. Tarsus was no mean city, but it was also no Alexandria. When Apollos came to Corinth with his intellectual ability, his fine speaking skill, his expository skill in the Old Testament scriptures, and his powerful confrontations with the Jews, it is no wonder that he began to attract a personal following. Paul, by contrast, appears to have lacked that electrifying presence. (2 Corinthians 10:10)

Apollos was from Alexandria, and it was there that scholars had made a science of allegorizing the scriptures and finding the most complicated and difficult meanings in the simplest passages. Here is an example of the kind of thing they did. The Epistle of Barnabas, an Alexandrian work, argues from a comparison of Genesis 14:14 and 18:23 that Abraham had a household of 318 people that he circumcised. The Greek for 18 (the Greeks used letters as symbols for numbers) is iota followed by eta, which are the first two letters of the name Jesus; and the Greek for 300 is the letter tau, which is the shape of the Cross; therefore this old incident is a foretelling of the crucifixion of Jesus on his Cross!

Some commentators suggest that Apollos might have been unwittingly responsible for introducing something of an intellectual elite into the Corinthian church. Apollos most likely did not stay very long in Corinth, but it was likely long enough for some to start contrasting him with Paul and to elevate Apollos into their own chosen guru.

The city of Corinth was known to have preachers from some school or another on every street corner, and the people there were accustomed to picking and

choosing between philosophers and schools of thought. That cultural baggage seems to have been brought into the church.

We should stress here that there is no indication at all that Paul, Apollos, or Peter (Cephas) supported or in any way approved of the divisions that had been created around their names. In fact Paul's other references to Apollos in the letter indicate that the opposite was true.

- **The Cephas Party**

The Cephas or Peter Party most likely included Jewish Christians. It has often been noted that if God had wanted more than one church, he would have set up one church for Gentiles and another for Jews -- but he did not. He established one church in which there would be peace between Jew and Gentile. (Ephesians 2) But in Corinth, it seems that a separate Jewish church was emerging.

Although some commentators doubt that Peter ever visited Corinth, I think the evidence suggests otherwise. First, the Paul and Apollos parties had formed around men who had been at Corinth, which suggests the same should be true of Peter. Second, the Corinthians seemed to have been aware that Peter traveled with his wife. (1 Cor. 9:5)

There is evidence in this letter of Jewish legalism in the church at Corinth, particularly involving food offered to idols, and this issue was likely driven by the Peter Party.

- **The Christ Party**

"Strange as it may seem, the party about which we know the least -- which may not even be a party -- has become the major preoccupation of a large mass of New Testament scholarship." Nearly every problem that surfaces in this letter has been attributed by some commentator to this nebulous group.

Some argue that there was no Christ party, but that the slogan "I of Christ" was Paul's own slogan, declared as a response to the other slogans. The original Greek had no punctuation or even spaces, and so this last slogan could very well be Paul's comment on the previous slogans.

While it is true that every Christian should say "I of Christ," the context of that phrase here suggests to me that it was being used by some group for another reason. More likely in my view is that a group had formed who thought that Christ belonged to them rather than that they belonged to Christ and this slogan was theirs. Fee says that "the grammar of the passage seems to demand that there were in fact Corinthians saying such a thing."

It should not be surprising to anyone in today's world that a denomination could wear the name of Jesus Christ -- and such seems to have been true about the Christ Party. If the Apollos Party considered themselves the Super Intellectual Elite, the Christ Party most likely considered themselves the Super Spiritual Elite. This group possibly contributed to the rise of Gnosticism in the church at Corinth. It is even possible that the Christ Party was a spill-over from the mystery religions of Corinth.

Clement of Rome (writing about AD 95) talks about these same divisions in the Corinthian church, though he does not mention the "Christ party." Perhaps by that time, the Christ Party had drifted so far away that they were no longer considered part of the church. Perhaps they left and formed their own "church" because they did not consider the others to be as spiritual as they were.

One final theory about the Christ party that fits well with Paul's comments in the following verses is that this Christ party wanted Christ but did not want the cross of Christ. Paul in verse 18 will remind them that "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." We cannot separate Christ from the cross, and we cannot separate ourselves from the cross. Luke 9:23 ("Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.") The cross is the power of God.

The result of these cliques was that they had caused everyone involved to take their eyes off of Jesus Christ -- and it is to that one true focus that Paul returns their attention in verse 13.