



## Part 2 - "Divided We Fall"

Text: **1 Corinthians 1: 10-17**

**Church division, tensions, and splits sadly occur too often. It's surprising to find early on in the Corinthian story that the fledgling church is already seeking to divide itself along lines of their preference for different teachers; teachers who were serving the church in an apostolic vision and saw themselves as a team not adversaries.**

- Can you identify stories of churches that have broken up after division has ripped people apart?

Your stories will sadly be familiar in pattern and outcome. Read 1 Corinthians 1: 10-17 and identify what the main issues were.

On Sunday I suggested that the church was facing a problem that was built into their culture. The Greeks celebrated Sophists and Philosophers who brought wise and philosophical teachings to their community. This was as much a form of elite entertainment as it was advocating for answers to the mysteries of the universe. Sophists and Philosophers were sponsored by wealthy households and became treasured parts of that family. Often the teachers would travel a circuit over a year and return regularly to households to speak on new things. This brought fame and celebrity to the teacher and a sort of reflected glory for the sponsors. It's this reflected glory that satisfied egos which gets in the way of our early church apostles because households wanted to own their apostles in the Greek fashion.

- Can you think of how this desire for reflected glory impacts our society today?

It may be more pervasive than you first acknowledge.

As part of my talk on Sunday I took us to Acts 14: 8-15 (read the text)

Here Paul having prayed for a man who was healed finds the locals wanted to venerate him and Barnabas as Greek Gods Zeus and Hermes. Paul pushed back on this form of praise for him and reminded the crowds that he and Barnabas were just men like anyone else. Paul wasn't going to take any glory that was due to the Lord.

Proverbs 27: 21 says:

***"The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but people are tested by the praise they receive."***

- Discuss this proverb. I think it's particularly pertinent in or NZ culture.

Popularity contests are common. Be it children in the school playground, politicians, musicians or sadly also in Christian ministry.

- What's a right response to those who the Lord has gifted to teach or lead?

Or put it another way . . .

- What's a correct expectation from those who render this form of service to the Christian community?

Paul's answer to the potential division that was brewing amongst this Corinthian church was to point people back to Jesus as a reference for right behavior. Jesus was not divided. Paul was not crucified. Notice how Paul didn't enter into a debate about the strengths and weaknesses of the various teachers whom they were following. But rather he pointed the church back to Jesus to rebuke and mend their behaviour.

- Discuss.

Enjoy . . .

Pastor Craig

