

Paul Remembers The Corinthians; Denounces Divisions; Extols God's Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1

Group ¹	C	V	Description
Appeal to Unity	1	1	Author
		2	Addressee
		3	Salutation
		4-9	Paul's encouragement and remembrance of the Corinthians in prayer
		10-17	Exhortation concerning divisions
The Wisdom of God		18-25	Wisdom of God and Wisdom of men
		26-31	Remember who and Whose you are

Reflections

I want to start with a few definitions of some terms that seem appropriate to this chapter. The first two are very common terms in religious communities and the third comes from the business world but I think could very easily apply to the religious communities as well – Sectarianism, Denominationalism, and Silo Mentality.

Sectarianism = sectarian spirit or tendencies; excessive devotion to a particular sect, especially in religion.² [link](#)

Denominationalism = denominational or sectarian spirit or policy; the tendency to divide into denominations or sects.³ [link](#)

Silo Mentality = an attitude when individuals or groups with an organization do not want to share information or knowledge with other individuals or groups in the same organization or with those outside the organization.⁴ [link](#)

I think that what Paul was addressing in this first chapter is the beginning of the same thing that had happened in the Jewish communities. Jewish rabbis would often have disciples who claimed to be a student of a certain teacher, i.e. Gamaliel, Hillel, etc.⁵ There were also groups, i.e. Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc., which taught different doctrines and even had arguments amongst each other about who was more right.⁶ Does that sound familiar at all? If it doesn't it should.

Of course this tendency also developed outside the Jewish religious communities as well. Consider the various Greek philosophical traditions, some of which had been around beginning in the 6th Century BC, by the time Paul came to Corinth: Pythagoreanism, Sophism, Cynicism, Cyrenaicism, Platonism, Peripateticism, Pyrrhonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Eclecticism.⁷ There even was even a movement in early Christianity which tried to blend some forms of Greek philosophy with Christianity beginning in the 2nd Century AD with Clement of Alexandria. Consider what was said of those in Athens when Paul visited.

1 (NASB) "Group" column from the headings in the NASB text.

2 ("Dictionary.com")

3 ("Dictionary.com")

4 ("Investopedia.com")

5 ("List of Rabbis")

6 ("Jewish Religious Movements")

7 ("Hellenistic Philosophy")

Paul Remembers The Corinthians; Denounces Divisions; Extols God's Wisdom

Acts 17:16-21 NASB Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. **17** So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. **18** And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. **19** And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? **20** "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." **21** (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

So with that in mind, when we consider the many denominations and groups within those denominations that have developed through the years since the 1st Century, it is mind boggling but it shouldn't surprise us.⁸ Much of this came from the mindset of everyone having to fit into a particular doctrinal group and if you didn't believe like a particular group believed, then you weren't apart of that group or *vice versa*.

Now don't get me wrong. There is one thing that is absolutely essential that Christians need to be united on in thought and belief, that is, who is Jesus? John in his first letter helps us understand how to determine whether someone is teaching accurately who Jesus is or not.

1 John 4:1-6 NASB Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; **3** and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. **4** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. **5** They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them. **6** We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Where might this come from? I think that it comes from the time when John asked to hinder another group who were casting out demons in Jesus' name. Jesus responded in what was probably a surprising way to the "son of thunder."

Mark 9:33-41 NASB They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He *began* to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?" **34** But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which *of them was* the greatest. **35** Sitting down, He called the twelve and *said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." **36** Taking a child, He set him before them, and

Luke 9:46-50 NASB An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest. **47** But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, **48** and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great." **49** John answered and said, "Master, we

⁸ Rose Publishing denominations pamphlet [link](#) (Bowman, Jr.) Others: ("Christian Denomination"; "Christian Theology")

Paul Remembers The Corinthians; Denounces Divisions; Extols God's Wisdom

taking him in His arms, He said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me." 38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. 40 "For he who is not against us is for us. 41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as <i>followers</i> of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.	saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us." 50 But Jesus said to him, "Do not hinder <i>him</i> ; for he who is not against you is for you."
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Jesus was always inclusive, except to those who sought to exclude Him, i.e. the Jewish religious leaders of the day. I think that this event was the beginning of how John developed his teaching regarding who Jesus is and how it should be used to determine who was a true or false prophet. John's teaching was in response to the beginning of what became known as Gnosticism and, in my opinion, was formed by this and through his direct interaction with both the physical body of Jesus and His resurrected body prior to His ascension.

That I believe is what Paul was addressing when he wrote the following about God's wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:21-24 NASB For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Everything in this life we live really is about Jesus! Don't be fooled into thinking that it is anything other than that.

Paul will address this issue of divisions again later in the letter.

There and Then: Here and Now

Answer the questions below as you reflect on your own life and this part of our study⁹: *my LOG vs others SPECK*. Here are some possible responses I've identified from the text that might apply to anyone.

S - Are there *sins* for me to avoid or confess?

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P - Are there *promises* from God for me to claim?

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E - Are there *examples* for me to follow or avoid?

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C - Are there *commands* for me to obey?

9 *Navigator Bible Study Handbook* (The Navigators), with additions & Matthew 7:1-5.

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K - How has this passage increased my *knowledge* about God / Jesus / Holy Spirit?
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Key Words: New Testament, Letters, 1 Corinthians, Saul/Paul, Prayer, Unity, Baptism, Divisions, God's Wisdom



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