

Preemptive Measures Against Disunity
1 Corinthians 1:10-17 (Part III)
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Introduction

This morning will be a practical application of last week's message. For the sake of jogging your memory I will recap what we discussed last week. Let me start by reminding you of the fact that the church in Corinth was dividing over leaders as Paul makes clear in 1:11-13. Some in the church in Corinth had an elevated view of her leaders. The issue was apparently large enough for Chloe, a respected member of the church, to send notification to Paul to inform him that things were starting to get out of hand. We do not know exactly how deep the division went, but we do know that it was bad enough to warrant four full chapters of warning, instruction, and rebuke from Paul's pen. In other words, the rivalries in the church over leaders was reaching a boiling point.

As we discussed last week, it was not Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and it definitely was not Christ who was to blame for the relational chaos and party spirit in Corinth. Who then was responsible? The people in the pew. The problem in Corinth was the result of competitive followership. The fact is that the believers in Corinth had elevated God's messengers so high that they began to divide over these leaders. And doctrine was not the root of their quarrels. In other words, the believers in Corinth were not pitting Paul against Apollos because Paul and Apollos were on opposite ends of the theological spectrum. No! Paul and Apollos, as demonstrated last week, saw themselves as co-laborers, fighting on the same team. The divisions, rather, revolved around issues of personality, gifting, and emphasis. Or, to say it another way, the Corinthian believers were not dividing over the content of Paul and Apollos' respective ministries but rather over the packaging of Paul and Apollos' respective ministries. Paul and Apollos (as well as Cephas and Christ) were preaching the same crucified and risen Jesus; they were just packaging the message of that same crucified and risen Jesus differently, and in this way evidencing the unique set of gifts and emphases that God Himself had given each of them.

Paul chastises the Corinthians for using God's messengers, and even for using Christ, as reasons for division. Although I mentioned this last week, it is worth repeating: on the first read-through one may find nothing wrong with those who are claiming to be 'of Christ.' However, this group was just as divisive as the rest. And why? Because they were using Jesus Himself as a cause for division. John Chrysostom helpfully explains, "Even those who said they were of Christ were at fault because they were implicitly denying this to others and making Christ the head of a faction rather than the head of the whole."¹ The fact is that the church in Corinth was splintering, and the catalyst of their division was a competitive followership, a pitting of the leaders of Christ against themselves.

Modern Day Division Over Leaders

So, how does all of this biz about division over leaders hit us where we are at today? Anyone who has been in church for any length of time knows that it hits us in more ways than we would like to share. The fact is that the church of Jesus Christ today struggles with the reality of leader-based rivalries just as much as did the church in ancient Corinth. **I will be answering one main question this morning: How do we keep ourselves from falling into the same trap of division into which the Corinthians fell? Or, to put it another way, how do we protect**

¹ Dio Chrysostom as cited in Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 134.

ourselves against the sin of dividing over leaders? This is why the sermon is titled, “Preemptive Measures Against Disunity.” Although Paul certainly sets out to answer this very question in 1:18-4:21 (that is the whole aim and point of Paul’s words from 1:18-4:21), it will be helpful to just make a few introductory comments about how we can protect ourselves from repeating the sins of the Corinthian church. I have just four practical guidelines for our consideration.

1. Be on the alert:

Recognize this as one of the tactics of the enemy. The fact is that we have no excuse. There is no questioning the craftiness of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:1-15; 1 Peter 5:8), and yet the word of God and church history have proven that his tactics against the body of Jesus Christ are all-too predictable. This is why the word of God must remain central; in many ways the word of God is a manual about our enemy. I can tell you right now with 100% confidence that Satan will try to pit the leaders of Sovereign Grace Fellowship against each other and will try to turn followership into the same competitive game that it was in Corinth. He will get the people of God to so elevate one leader that they demonize all the other leaders. This is exactly what seemed to be happening in Corinth. Apollos came on the scene with the skills of a master orator. Many of the Corinthian believers looked on in wonder and began to elevate him to the place of second command (second, of course, only to Jesus Christ). They elevated him so much that they began to demonize all other leaders who packaged the same message in a different way.

So, if I dare ask, how has Satan been working in your life; how has he been elevating and deflating the leaders here at SGF in your own mind? In what areas has he said to you, “You know, if Pastor A. and Pastor B. were more like Pastor C. in this way...” or “If Pastor B. and Pastor C. were more like Pastor A. in this way...” or “If Pastor C. and Pastor A. were more like Pastor B. in this way...” If he can pit God’s messengers against each other, creating doubts in the minds of God’s people about those He has appointed to serve His body, half of the battle has already been won.

God has Satan pegged and has revealed to us his ‘top secret’ tactics in His word. The goal is to cut Satan off at the pass, short-circuiting his plans of division. Any military or a sports team that is serious about victory will take the time necessary to learn the moves and tactics of the opposition to avoid being caught off guard by the strategies of the opposition. Or as Katsumoto says in reply to Captain Algren (played by Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*) after being challenged as to why he was so interested in continuing a relationship with the prisoner of war; I want “To know my enemy.” To know your enemy is to gain an advantage over your enemy, because you can preempt before he strikes. To simply be aware that this is one of the schemes in his bag of tricks is to be one step ahead of the opposition. We know that Satan loves to sew discord among the people of God and that he loves to discredit God’s appointed messengers (see 2 Corinthians 10-13). He loves to do so because he knows that this is the sure-fire way of discrediting the message of the cross. If you can discredit the messenger, you can discredit the message he preaches.

2. Embrace God’s view of leaders.

To embrace God’s view of leaders involves two things: 1. not elevating God’s messengers/leaders too high, and yet 2. it also involves honoring them with an understanding of their unique role in God’s economy. Satan is so crafty at this point. If he can’t beat you one way, he will beat you another (unless, of course, you keep your nose in God’s word and anticipate his

predictable attacks); he will tempt you to either idolize God's messengers or he will tempt you to discredit them altogether. The reality of this sort of an extreme reaction to God's messengers is clearly seen in 1 Corinthians 1:12.

What I am saying is this: each of you says, "I'm with Paul," or "I'm with Apollos," or "I'm with Cephas," or "I'm with Christ."

It is obvious that some in the church of Corinth fell into the trap of lionizing men, setting Paul, Apollos, and Paul up as demi-gods (as is evidenced by the Paul, Apollos, and Cephas groups) while others saw themselves as completely independent, deeming God's appointed messengers as unnecessary, replaceable fixtures in the church (as is evidenced by the Christ group). Both reactions are simply sinful. It is sinful to look to men to do for you that which only Christ can do, and it is sinful to not honor those whom God has appointed to leadership.

Paul will go on in 1 Corinthians 3:5-8 and 4:1 to tell them how they should esteem both himself and Apollos.

1 Corinthians 3:5-8; So, what is Apollos? And what is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed and each has the role the Lord has given. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. Now the one who plants and the one who waters are equal, and each will receive his reward according to his own labor.

1 Corinthians 4:1; A person should consider us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of God's mysteries.

In these two passages Paul is trying to deflate their idea of both himself and Apollos. He is going to every length, almost pleading with them, to not think of men too highly. This was the cause of their division; they were elevating certain men to the level of a demi-god to the detriment of all of God's other messengers. And yet although Paul deemed it an utter necessity to deflate the Corinthians view of leaders, he also saw it essential to teach the people of God to not devalue the place and role of God's appointed leaders. In other words, although we must not elevate men too high, we must also remember that God demands His people to respect and honor those whom he has placed in leadership roles in the church. For example look with 1 Corinthians 16:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:17-19.

1 Corinthians 16:15-18; ¹⁵ Brothers, you know the household of Stephanas: they are the firstfruits of Achaia and have devoted themselves to serving the saints. I urge you ¹⁶ also to submit to such people, and to everyone who works and labors with them. ¹⁷ I am delighted over the presence of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because these men have made up for your absence. ¹⁸ For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore recognize such people.

1 Timothy 5:17-19 (ESV); ⁷Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his

wages." ¹⁹Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

Keep in mind now that the same Paul who wrote 1 Corinthians 1-4 also wrote 1 Corinthians 16 and 1 Timothy 5. Paul insisted that God's people not think too highly of God's appointed leaders and yet that they not esteem them too lowly either. We can truly say of the Corinthians that they simultaneously had too high of a view of leaders and too low of a view of leaders. For example, some of them had too high of a view of Paul while at the same time having too low of a view of Apollos. Others had too high of a view of Apollos while at the same time having far too low of a view of Paul. Have a healthy view of those whom God has appointed for leadership in the church. Paul tells Timothy to "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor." Double honor certainly involves financial compensation (as the context suggests) and yet it involves much more than that.

Paul tells Timothy further that he is to not entertain an accusation against a leader unless it can be established on the basis of 2 or 3 witnesses. Why would Paul have to command Timothy to not entertain such accusations? Because such false accusations are common. And why are they common? Because Satan does everything he can to discredit the teaching and lives of God's appointed messengers. He does everything he can to get our focus off of Christ—either by elevating God's appointed messengers to point of pushing Christ out of the picture or by discrediting God's appointed messengers and in so doing discrediting their Christ-centered message (as evidenced in 2 Corinthians 10-13). This in no way means that God's messengers are above sin or that they are impervious to church discipline. In fact, Paul will go on in the context to explain to Timothy that when an elder is caught in unrepentant sin that the church must deal with his sin publicly (see 1 Timothy 5:20-21).

If we view God's leaders from His perspective then we will neither elevate them too high nor will we devalue their worth and value in the Kingdom of God. So... the lesson: ***understand that God's appointed leaders for the church are nothing but servants and managers who are worthy of double honor.*** Understand that Satan wants nothing more than for you to either elevate God's leaders to the status of a demi-god or to so take them with a grain of salt that their ministry has no effect whatsoever on your heart. Certainly, we are to be like the Bereans who "examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things [that Paul was preaching] were so" (Acts 17:11). But we must read the whole verse. So often the Bereans are known as those who were scrupulous, examining every little word of Paul, turning over every little phrase, to see if they could find fault with anything that he said—as if God praised them for their suspicion of God's appointed apostle. But this is just not the case. The Bereans were not known for their knit-pickiness, but rather for their biblical discernment. There is a world of difference between these two ideas. In fact, a simple reading of this passage in its context proves the fact that the Bereans were not endlessly suspicious of every little word that came out of Paul's mouth. Notice that they were "open-minded" and that they "welcomed the message with eagerness." They were not looking to trip Paul up or to prove him wrong; rather, they were simply just doing their best to guard themselves against blasphemy. They were excited about the things that Paul was saying about Jesus being the fulfillment of the Old Testament and yet they wanted to be careful to make sure that they were not swallowing a large lump of heresy. Consider the passage.

The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures ⁽¹⁾ daily to see if these things were so (Acts 17:11)

Why do I bring this up? Because many have misused this passage as an excuse for division, suggesting that it is our job as Christians to be suspicious (as opposed to being level-headedly discerning) about what comes out of the mouths of God's appointed messengers. There are some Christians out there who seem to believe that God's messengers are somehow guilty until proven innocent. There is nothing of Acts 17 in this. This is nothing more than an attack from the enemy to discredit God's messengers. Those who justify such divisiveness in the name of having a 'Berean spirit' must be called to repentance.

To have such a low view of the leaders that God has appointed leads to division; it leads to suspicion and rebellion. And yet we know that it is just as dangerous to exalt any one of God's leaders to the place of preeminence, as if the ministry were about the exaltation of men. The ministry is about the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and although those who lead well are worthy of double honor, they are to be seen as nothing more than servants and managers.

3. Do not use the world's standards for evaluating the worth of a leader.

You will remember from last week's message that this is exactly what the Corinthians were doing; they were evaluating the worth, value, and effectiveness of their leaders according to the standards of Corinth. This is most likely the primary reason why some in the church were favoring Apollos over Paul; because Apollos preached with the eloquence just as did the public debaters (Sophists) who were so popular in secular Corinth. Paul's ministerial credentials were suspect because he did not have a demanding, larger-than-life, pomp and circumstance presence in his preaching. He simply didn't fit the bill—he didn't look like or talk like any of the popular secular leaders of the day. And because of this, many discredited his ministry and his worth as a Spirit-filled leader of God's church.

We struggle with the same thing today, it just evidences itself differently. Is it not true that we often use the world's ideals and standards of leadership to judge the worth and value of God's Spirit-filled leaders? Surely, we do not have rhetoricians running around (as the Corinthians did); however, we do have the tendency to evaluate the worth and effectiveness of God's appointed leaders by comparing their methods or credentials to the methods and credentials of America's corporate leaders. The first questions asked about a potential pastor usually have nothing to do with his character but rather with his strategic abilities. Instead of asking about his love for God, God's Son, God's word, and God's people, we ask the following sorts of questions: Can this man sell a product? Can he rally people around himself, sell them an idea, and bring a vision to fruition? How good is this man at delegating? Does he run a tight ship and yet maintain healthy relationships with his underlings? How efficient is he? How successful is he? How many parts per hour can he produce? How well can he sell and implement good ideas? How large is his church? How many followers does he have? How many baptisms does he perform every year?

Now don't get me wrong, these are incredibly important skills and tasks, and yet these are not the tell-tale signs of a Spirit-filled leader. What then are the marks of a Spirit-filled leader? Paul identifies it for the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 4:18-19;

Now some are inflated with pride, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will know not the talk but the power of those who are inflated with pride. For the kingdom of God is not in talk but in power.

The power of the God is the tell-tale sign. How is this power evidenced? Not in eloquent preaching nor in massive conversion, but in changed lives. Here is the first question which should be asked about a potential leader: Does the power of God rest on this individual? That is the question to ask. Not power in eloquent preaching per-se—in other words, not powerful, thunder persuasion from the pulpit, but the powerful effects of the Spirit of God on the hearts and in the life of the people of God. How do you evaluate the worth, value, and effectiveness of God's leaders? Here are the questions we ought to be asking to make an accurate assessment: How much does he love God? How much does he love God's Son? How much does he love God's word? How much does he love God's people? How good of a grasp does he have on the theology of the Scriptures? Does he have an ability to break open the word? Does he love truth and hate sin so much that he will not tuck his tail and run the other way when confrontation is necessary to uphold truth and combat error? These are the tell-tale signs of Spirit-filled leadership.

What is the point? As soon as you start evaluating the worth, value, and effectiveness of God's leaders with the yard-stick of the culture, you will discredit the worth, value, and effectiveness of those leaders who do not emulate such qualifications, and you will elevate those who do. You will end up creating in the body of Christ an unnecessary divide; those leaders who fit the part of corporate America and those leaders who don't. The leaders who do fit the part will be elevated and the leaders who do not fit the part will be devalued.

We must remember that God's standards of leadership have more to do with character than they do with strategy. So many modern day books on leadership are useless for this very reason; they focus more on strategy than character, more on fostering relationships with the well-to-do than fostering a relationship with Jesus. This is a problem. So many churches today fire pastors simply on the basis of a lack of results. "Sure, he loves Jesus, loves God's word, loves God's people, is not afraid to deal with sin, is able to break open the word with boldness and passion... but we had to let him go. He just wasn't cutting the cheese; he just didn't know how to close the deal; he just didn't know how to wrangle them in." I trust that you know that success in regard to numbers is not the tell-tale sign that God is at work. Oftentimes numbers are nothing more than an indication that leaders are manipulating the truth to fit the sensitive palates of sinners who want to find company, security, and ease in their sin. Of course, growth is a good thing (and a lack of growth can be an astounding wake-up call to get more serious about the advancement of the Gospel), but numbers are not the tell-tale sign of Spirit-filled leadership. In fact, sometimes faithfulness to the Gospel will result in a period (even an extended period) of decline as opposed to growth. Just look at Isaiah's ministry (Isaiah 6:9-13), Jeremiah's ministry (Jeremiah 17-20), and even the very ministry of Jesus himself. Jesus was contested on every front. Many times whole droves of people left Him simply because of His passion to speak God's truth (for example see John 6:60-71). What then is the tell-tale sign of Spirit-filled leadership? The power of God! In other words, Spirit-filled leadership is not evidence as much by strength, courage, or eloquence but rather by dependence and humility.

In order to win the war against disunity we must adopt God's yard stick for evaluating leaders or we will at the same time discredit certain leaders who do not 'fit the part' and elevate those who do.

4. Celebrate diversity

Celebrate the fact that God has given each leader a specific set of gifts, specific emphases, and specific passions. So often we read passages like Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, passages which deal primarily with the diverse gifts that God has given different members of the body, and we celebrate the fact that God has not made us all the same. Just as a sample let us consider Romans 12:4-8

⁴ Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵ in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. ⁶ According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of faith; ⁷ if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

When we read passages like this we have a desire to know where we fit—what unique gifts the Lord has given us. As we share with others which gifts the Lord has given, we celebrate the fact that no two Christians are the same. We celebrate the diversity of the body of Christ. However, for one reason or another, when it comes to leadership, such diversity is oftentimes not appreciated as much. But we must remember that the principles of Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4 apply to leaders just as much as they apply to anyone else in the body of Christ.

Certainly, there are certain gifts that all pastors and elders are to possess. For example, Paul makes it quite clear in 1 Timothy 3:2 that every elder must be ‘able to teach.’ This is true and yet we all know that although each elder must be able to teach, not all elders will teach in the same way, emphasize the same things, or communicate the same passion. Acts 6:2-4 clearly lays out the primary role of God’s appointed church leaders in the body of Christ.

“2 Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to wait on tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (ESV).

It seems that most Christians have a different idea as to what the “ministry of the word” entails. Some suggest that by devoting themselves to ‘the Word of God’ the apostles were devoting themselves to evangelism (i.e., ministering the Word to the unconverted), others suggest that this means that they were devoting themselves to ‘preaching’ (i.e., ministering the Word for the purpose of encouraging and equipping the already-converted), still others suggest that it refers to ‘crisis counseling’ (i.e., ministering the word to those in emotional, spiritual, and/or mental turmoil), others suggest that it refers to ‘word-based discipleship’ (i.e., ministering the word in the context of a small, select number), while others have a more holistic view and suggest that by devoting themselves to the ‘Word of God’ the apostles were setting themselves apart for the whole kit and caboodle, including any and every ministry having to do with the word. The fact is, however, that no one man can give due attention to each of these vital aspects of word based ministry, nor should he try.

The Lord has simply given some pastors a passion for the public preaching of the Gospel to unbelievers, to others he has given a passion for one-on-one discipleship, to others he has given a passion for crisis counseling, to others he has given a passion for the pursuit of accuracy in regard to theology and interpretation. This is not to suggest that it is acceptable when pastors neglect essential aspects of their calling to fulfill their unique passions, but it does mean that diversity in leadership emphasis and gifting must be appreciated.

Let me take this a step further, I may walk up to a pastor—we will call him “Pastor A.—and ask him, “What makes you tick; what unique passion has the Lord given you?” Pastor A. responds, “The Lord has given me a passion for evangelism.” I then ask, “How does your passion for evangelism evidence itself in your week-to-week, day-to-day schedule?” Pastor A. responds, “Well, the Lord has specifically given me a passion to evangelize the elderly. I go to a different nursing home in our area every day of the week. I spend time with the elderly, hold their hands, listen to their stories, listen to their struggles, and minister the word of God to them.” I then go up to another pastor—we will call him Pastor B.—and ask him, “What makes you tick; what unique passion has the Lord given you?” Pastor B. responds, “The Lord has given me a passion for evangelism.” I then ask, “How does your passion for evangelism evidence itself in your week-to-week, day-to-day schedule?” Pastor A. responds, “Well, the Lord has specifically given me a passion for open air preaching. I go to the town square at least twice a week, pass out tracks, meet new people, and preach for about an hour or two, emphasizing nothing but the cross of Christ.” I then go up to another pastor—we will call him Pastor C.—and ask him, “What makes you tick; what unique passion has the Lord given you?” Pastor C. responds, “The Lord has given me a passion for evangelism.” I then ask, “How does your passion for evangelism evidence itself in your week-to-week, day-to-day schedule.” Pastor C. responds, “Well, the Lord has especially given me a passion for evangelizing the down-and-outs. I make frequent trips to the jail during the week and spend a healthy amount of time with the folks at the local rescue mission.”

This is true is it not? Each of the three pastors mentioned above are emphasizing the preaching of the word of God to the lost and yet each of their respective ministries reflect the unique set of gifts and passions that the Lord has given them. The same is true for those who have a passion for discipleship; while one pastor may emphasize discipleship by taking 3 or 4 or 10 men under his wing (as Jesus did) by teaching them the theology of the Scriptures in a small group setting, another may emphasize discipleship by inviting different individuals or families over to his house for dinner a couple times a week. One emphasizes discipleship mostly through instruction, the other through exemplification, putting his life on display. Which one is right and which is wrong? Both are necessary. Both discipleship ministries must be appreciated.

What is the point of all of this? Every leader is different. God has given each and every leader in the church a unique set of spiritual gifts and unique passions. No two pastors emphasize the same things in the same way. Not only is this the case, but no two pastors have the same personality. Some pastors are outgoing while others are socially reserved; some pastors are humorous while others are more serious; some talk a lot while others are quiet; some are quick on the draw to exercise tough love while others have a tendency to avoid confrontation. Every leader is different and unless a pastor is being biblically negligent, the variety of gifts and passions and emphases must not merely be put up with, but celebrated and enjoyed.

Often times, though, what happens, is that the people of God have a specific picture in their head of what a pastor should look like, talk like, and sound like; the people of God oftentimes have in their heads a prefabricated understanding of what a pastor should emphasize

and how he should go about emphasizing it. This was certainly the case with the divide between Paul and Peter. God had called Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles and Peter to be the apostle to the Jews. On the one hand, one wonders whether Paul really had a heart for the Jews when he would so quickly turn to the Gentiles after being immediately rejected by the Jews when he went from town to town. On the other hand, one would have to question if Peter really understood the universal implications of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in light of his predominately Jew-oriented preaching itinerary. The fact is that Paul did have a heart for the Jews (see Romans 9) and Peter did understand the universal implications of the Good News of Jesus Christ for the nations (see Acts 15:7-11). Why then did their ministries look so different? Because God had called them to fulfill a specific purpose. Some questioned Paul's credentials as an apostle simply because of his unique calling while they elevated Peter, and others questioned Peter's apostolic credentials to be simply because of the unique calling that God had given him while they elevated Paul. Whose emphasis was more biblical, Paul's or Peter's? They were equally biblical. Their unique gifting and unique calling brought about a unique emphasis.

Sometimes those who have a special passion for the down-and-outs will become immediately suspicious of a pastor if he does not exude the same passion. Sometimes those who have a passion for truth, precise biblical truth, will immediately become suspicious of a pastor if he does not spend more time reading and writing books than he does counseling the people of God. Sometimes those who have a passion for evangelism will immediately become suspicious of a pastor if he allows more time for the study of the word of God than evangelism. Sometimes those who have a passion for discipleship will immediately become suspicious of a pastor who spends more time evangelizing or preparing sermons than he does emphasizing one-on-one or one-on-two (or three-on-one or... etc.) relationship building.

God uniquely gifts and equips each leader to serve specific functions for the advancement of the glory of God. Not only is such diversity necessary for the church to display a full-orbed view of the multi-faceted glory of Christ (as Kevin so eloquently communicated a few months ago), but it is also necessary that the ministry of the church might be able to reach as many people from as many backgrounds and as many age groups as possible. Diversity among leaders is to be celebrated; the more diverse the leadership, the greater the potential for a ministry which is not partial in its mission. No one man can reach every single niche or group in society. No one man can effectively equip every single person in the church for ministry (see Ephesians 4:11-13). A homogenous leadership team will be limited in its scope and mission.

What is the point of all of this? If diversity is celebrated, differences will be a cause for celebration, not division.

Conclusion

These are just a few guidelines that should help us in our battle against disunity. The list offered above is not exhaustive and must not be treated as such. However, the church must be aware of the great temptation that lies at our door. The church has always and will always struggle with division over leaders. Paul's whole goal and aim in 1 Corinthians 1:18-4:21 is to radically reshape the Corinthians worldview in order to fix this issue of division over leaders. So consider this sermon a practical introduction of sorts to the rest of this section.

Appendix: I am a Calvinist

Although this is not a matter of central importance, I have heard many Christians use 1 Corinthians 1:10-16 as a proof text to suggest that it is a sin to refer to oneself as a Calvinist or an Arminian or an Augustinian or the like. However, it is important to note that there is a great deal of difference between calling yourself a Calvinist and saying “I am of Calvin.” This passage in no way prohibits the people of God from identifying ourselves with Christ’s leaders. To suggest such is to miss the point of the passage entirely. The problem with the Corinthian church was not that they were naming doctrines after the men who had packaged them in helpful ways, but rather that they were following personalities, dividing over leaders. As I have already said, the issue in Corinth was not doctrinal; it had to do with personality, gifting, and ministerial emphasis. When I say that I am a Calvinist, all I mean is that I agree with what Calvin had to say specifically about God’s sovereignty in the salvation of men and women. This is an entirely different thing than what was going on in Corinth. Now, if I were to read and pour over John Calvin’s works and push them on everyone else, suggesting that your Christianity will be largely lacking unless you delve into the bulk of Calvin’s works, that would be a different thing altogether. However, there is nothing inherently wrong with labels (even if the label bears the name of a theologian from church history). In fact, labels can be extremely helpful in the task of hashing out and communicating the rich truths of God’s word. Although some may suggest that the mere presence of doctrinal labels brings unnecessary reasons for division, there is no Scriptural precedent for issuing such warnings. The Scriptures never speak out against the usage of labels which are oftentimes extremely useful in the communication of theological truth. I do not doubt that such labels invite unnecessary division, but I am also keenly aware that anything and everything in the life of the church invites unnecessary division (including the apparel of a pastor and his family)!