

NO DIVISIONS

Man always has to battle against the tendency to trust in his own wisdom. This problem affected the Corinthian church in the first century. Corinth was similar to nearby Athens in their confidence in human wisdom. This importance placed on human wisdom caused the Corinthians to exalt some teachers over other teachers. Of course, different people liked different teachers, so they were divided over their opinions of the various teachers.

The importance of this problem is evident in **1 Corinthians**. Division is the first problem Paul discusses, and he spends more time confronting this than he does for any other problem (**1 Cor. 1-4**).

Paul begs them in the name of the Lord not to be divided (**1:10**). The body of Christ should not be divided because Christ is not divided (**v.13**).

Instead of following Paul, Peter, or Apollos, we should follow Jesus. He is the one who died for us and bought us by His blood. We were baptized into Christ (**Romans 6:3-4**), so we belong to Christ. (The men Paul used as an illustration were not the actual teachers over which the Corinthians were divided—**4:6**)

Many misunderstand the meaning of Paul's remarks in **1:14-17**. Instead of diminishing the importance of baptism, we see its importance in **verse 13**. Unity is based on baptism (see also **Ephesians 4:5** and **1 Cor. 12:13-14**). Paul was glad that he did not do the actual baptizing so people would not think that they are disciples of Paul because he was their baptizer. This indicates that the Corinthians understood the importance of baptism.

Verse 17 is especially misapplied. "*For Christ did **not** send me to baptize, **but** to preach the gospel*" is a classic "not...but" statement where the emphasis is not on the first part but the second part. The first part is not excluded or prohibited. **John 6:27** says **not** to work for food that perishes **but** for the food that brings everlasting life. Taken out of context, **John 6:27** would contradict **2 Thess. 3:10**! Taken out of context, "*Christ did not send me to baptize*" would contradict **Matt. 28:19**. Christ sent Paul and the other apostles to preach the gospel. The one who believes is to be baptized, and those who believe and are baptized are saved (**Mark 16:15-16**). The emphasis must be on the teaching. Without it, belief leading to baptism would not occur anyway.

Paul spends the rest of the time showing that the message, not the messenger, is what is important in producing faith (**3:1-7**). The message is the expression of God's wisdom (**2:9-16**). When we submit to it, then God is glorified for His wisdom (**1:18-31**). The written message is the boundary for our respect of a gospel teacher (**4:6**).