

"I Beseech You, Brethren ..."

"... through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you" (1 Cor. 1:10f).

This appeal, "*I beseech you*," is a trademark of Paul. Although not used exclusively by him; his writings are sprinkled throughout with such statements. There is scarcely a letter of his in which he does not ask brethren to do something, or to be something or to abstain from something, but this phrase, "*I beseech you*." In some of his letters the phrase appears multiple times, such as in this epistle.

These brethren are besought upon the highest authority -- the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus has a name higher than angels; a name above every name; a name in which salvation is alone found; a name in which whatever one does, whether word or deed, he is to do in the name of Jesus (Heb. 1:4; Phil. 2:9; Acts 4:12; Col. 3:17). There was no higher source to which the apostle could appeal than "*through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*."

The concern of the apostle was that these brethren might be unified; that there would be no divisions among them but that they would be perfected together in the same mind and same judgment. One of Satan's most effective weapons in his arsenal of deadly bombs against God's work is his creation of strife and division among disciples. As is seen in this appeal, as is evident from his other appeals to these brethren, they were sadly divided. Nothing disrupts God's work more than division. The adage, "United we stand, divided we fall," has always been true. It is true in carnal warfare. Joshua was a skilled warrior who used well this strategy which he sought to conquer Canaan. His thrust at Jericho was such an attack -- right in the middle of the Canaanites, and when he had secured Jericho, he then made northern and southern thrusts. Jesus said, "*A house divided against itself cannot stand*" (Mt. 12:25). He made this statement in His response to accusations that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub. He reminded them that were this true, Satan would be fighting against himself. He is too cunning and skilled to do that. God's people must be united to fight against a common enemy. One of the tragedies in the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) was that "infightings" were ongoing as they were fought the Romans without. History tells that there were five or six factions fighting each other as well as fighting the Romans. Little wonder the city fell. We see brethren warring with each other when we ought to be united and warring against

him who is the adversary of us all. Paul warned the Galatians, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed lest ye be consumed one of another*" (Gal. 5:15). There comes to mind a perfect example of this. Many years ago I held a number of meetings for a sizable congregation in a little town of less than 1,000 in another state. But, these brethren were at war with each other; finally dividing into two congregations. They existed for a few years, bickering and quarreling with each other, baptizing few, if any folks from their community. Today, neither congregation exists, a graphic illustration of Paul's statement: "*Take heed lest ye be consumed one of another.*"

It is our Lord's prayer that His people be united. "*Neither for these only do I pray but for them also that believe on me through their word that they may all be one, even as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me*" (Jn. 17:20f). Jesus told His disciples, "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if he have love one for another*" (Jn. 13:35).

The divisions at Corinth reflected itself in many ways: "preacheritis," lawsuits, quarrelings over the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, and liberty. A strong dose of brotherly love would have cured most of their ills and healed a fractured and divided church. It still will today.

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