

Followers of Man

“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” - 1 Corinthians 1:12

SPEAKERS

July 4 - Ken Storm
Holy Communion

July 11 - David Lappi

July 18th - Ken Storm

July 25 - Charles Korhonen

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Sunday Service:
11:00 a.m.

Wednesday Bible Study:
7:00 p.m.

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Paul is writing to a church of his that is on the verge of breaking apart. The church at Corinth started out in unity, in *“the testimony of Christ”* (1 Cor 1:6), but in three short years or so, since first coming into faith, it had developed several different factions all under the same roof. The distinctive characteristic of each faction that formed within the Corinthian church was that they considered themselves to be the exclusive party of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, or of Christ. They obviously tolerated each other but they did not fully recognize the other factions they comingled with as being legitimate. Paul condemned this separatist practice and said that they should all be of like mind (like they were at the start): *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by 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 perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”* (1 Cor 1:10). This was not to say that they all had to live their lives in the same manner but, rather, that they should maintain the same *“testimony of Christ”* within their hearts with which they first came into faith—their first love.

The words, *“every one of you saith”*, reveal how factious the Corinthian church had become. As already mentioned, they each had their beloved preacher, which of itself may not have been an issue, as the four people mentioned in our subject text all preached the same Word of God, but this partiality of man led to undue exaltation of man at the expense of the soul-saving gospel; not as it was preached but as it was received within each faction—this, Paul strongly rebuked. Those that most favored Paul were undoubtedly those who came into faith through his preaching. For Apollos, it probably was because he was *“an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures”* (Acts 18:24) that he became more agreeable to some than to others. Cephas or Peter, on the other hand, was preferred by some people probably because he had travelled with Christ and had firsthand knowledge of His teachings. So each group had good reason for following the preacher that it did, but, as Paul warned, it was all about preaching the gospel of reconciliation and not about some emotional or some other attachment to a man, let alone to a group that held contempt for all other groups.

There was yet another group; it claimed the name of Christ as the only one to follow. What could be wrong with that? Well, Jesus' very actions during His short ministry testify that following Him was not what He wanted to happen. He often avoided crowds so that they would not follow Him because of his miracles but, rather, that they would obey His Word—no matter who spoke them. Jesus made this clear by saying, *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which*

endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you... ” (John 6:27).

Similarly to Paul’s warning against following man, Solomon warned in the Old Testament against using the writings of man, as if they were Scripture, to gain superior spiritual understanding—even though “*that which was written was upright, even words of truth*” (Ecclesiastes 12:10). Likewise, the four men mentioned in our subject text all preached the truth (the Word of God), so there should have not been a dispute there either. However, Paul and Solomon saw what was happening and issued warnings. Solomon wrote the following concerning the use of spiritual writings in a wrong manner, “*by these my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh*” (Ecclesiastes 12:11-12), and we already read of Paul’s concern over man-centered worship.

In both cases, neither Paul nor Solomon spoke against hearing or reading doctrinally sound messages; they just warned against unduly magnifying their importance to where the messages became gods, causing one to swerve to the right or to the left of what the Bible teaches about salvation; or to where the truth of the Bible becomes degraded in favor of group-think. Notice, it wasn’t the teacher or the writing that caused the problems; it was the people themselves who created the divisive doctrines. Scripture tells us, “*cursed be the man that trusteth in man and... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord*” (Jer 17:5, 7). Thus, because we are to exhort (2 Tim 4:2) one another with the preached Word, believers are to place their trust only in the Bible; and one can only do this when he has repented and believed the gospel of forgiveness proclaimed to him by a servant of God (lest we become followers of man). This is our first taste “*of the heavenly gift*” (Heb 6:4); our first Love, from which a believer must never depart.

God’s Peace,

Charles Korhonen