

Staying Between Ditches – Part 2

I Corinthians 1:1-24

Thanksgiving is a key to unity. If we humble ourselves before God and count our many blessings, we have to look around and realize that we share this faith and these blessings with many others...and that is a blessing also! (I Corinthians 1:1-4; Colossians 3:12-17; Philippians 1:1-5; I John 3:16; 4:11; 5:1-2)

Thankfulness must be based on truth, not on lies. See Psalm 19:8; 119:62,127-128; 138:2; I Corinthians 13:4-6. **Unthankfulness** brings forth lies and the suppression of the truth. See Romans 1:18-23 (vs. 18, “hold” = to hold down or suppress). Therefore, thankful people need to unite with each other in the bonds of love and truth (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-15).

Our Scripture reading (I Corinthians 1:1-24) is dealing with the complicated subject of Christian unity. Verse 10 tells us to, “**...Speak the same thing...**” to “**...Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (understanding).**”

Last week we considered what keeps us between the ditches:

- The Grace of God (vs. 4)
- The Power of God (vs. 18)
- The Wisdom of God (vs.23- 24)

These three things are all centered on who Christ is and what He does.

Verse 10 also tells us, “**...That there be no divisions among you...**” This week we will consider the ditches that we can fall into. Simply stated, we go into a ditch whenever the truth, as it is in Jesus, is no longer the center of our thoughts and actions (I Corinthians 2:2; Ephesians 4:20-32; Colossians 1:1-19; 2:6-10).

What are the “divisions” (schisms) that I Corinthians 1:10 & 11:18 prohibits? “Schism” comes from the Greek word “Schizo” (a split or gap), where we also get the term “schizo phrenic” (split-mind). In first Corinthians 1:11, Paul mentions “contentions” (strife, quarrels, rivalry).

What divisions can we fall into that will hinder us from being thankful, gracious, united members of the body of Christ?

- **Divisions about men and movements of men: denominations, ordinances, sacraments.**

We have had about 2000 years to make things complicated with the many facets of “organized” religion. People have joined ranks with various leaders and teachings, dividing over many issues. Doctrine is important (I Timothy 4:16; II Timothy 3:15 – 4:5), but no true doctrine should distract us from the universal truth of Christ and the Gospel. See I Corinthians 1:11-17; 3:1-23.

- **Divisions about words: worldly wisdom and scholarship.**

Words are important (Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5-6), but words can also entangle and snare us (Proverbs 10:19; Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; Matthew 12:33-37). Beware of systems of teaching that do not lead to greater love for / faith in Christ; that cause unnecessary divisions; and that lead to ungodliness (I Corinthians 1:17-29; 2:1-5; 4:19-20; 11:17-19; I Timothy 6:3-6, 20-21; II Timothy 2:14-17,22-26).

- **Divisions about power: signs and wonders; competition for attracting / controlling the crowds.**

Jesus warned that it was “an evil and adulterous generation” that seeks after a sign (Matthew 12:38-39 cp. 7:21-23). Yet, the kingdom of God is marked by power (I Corinthians 4:20 cp. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) Please notice that God’s power is focused on changing lives, not impressing people’s emotions or pride. Today, “power-religion” can be occupied with demonstrating super-natural abilities or with larger amounts of people, money, buildings, programs, culture, etc. While God is capable of giving us any of these things, the focus is on the salvation of men’s souls and the Glory of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (I Corinthians 1:22-24; 6:9-11; Romans 1:14-16; I Thessalonians 1:5-10; Ephesians 3:20-21). **Stay Focused!...Philippians 4:6-9.**