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Causes of Division in the Church at Corinth 1:18 to 4:13



The problem that **Paul** addresses at the outset of **his** letter is probably the best known of them all. Additionally, because of our own experience with the Visual Church being divided into different denominations, and especially because we have sometimes also experienced painfully destructive quarrels within the church in various ways, we instinctively feel ourselves immediately in touch with their problems.

A careful reading of **1:18** to **4:13** indicates that there were at least **four issues involved**.

1. There was quarreling and divisiveness among them, with their various teachers as rallying points.

2. This quarreling was in some way being carried out in the name of "*sophia*," or "wisdom."

3. Related to these first two items are the repeated references to **the Corinthians** "boasting" **(1:29-31, 3:21** and **4:7)**, and being "puffed up" **(4:6** and **18-19)**.

4. Apart from the personal application to **himself** and **Apollos (3:5-23)**, the rest of the response has a decidedly apologetic ring to it, in which **Paul** is defending not

only **his** own past ministry among them **(1:16-17** and **2:1** to **3:4)**, but also **his** present relationship to them, since they seemed to be "judging" **him (4:1-21)**.

Therefore, in a more profound way than is sometimes recognized, this opening issue is the most crucial in the letter, not because their "quarrels" were the most significant problem in the church, but because the nature of this particular strife had as its root cause a faulty theology, in which they had exchanged the theology of the cross for an immature boastfulness that went beyond, if not excluded, the cross.

In **Paul's** argument with them, therefore, **three areas** need to be addressed:

1. A Faulty View of the Good News – 1:18 to 3:4 (Al)

2. A Faulty View of God's Shepherds – 3:5 to 4:5 (As)

3. A Faulty View of God's Gifts – 4:6-13 (Ax)[23]