David A. Rankin “Tony” #42

1 Corinthians

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Paul’s Concerns for the Assembly: The Lord’s Supper, Spiritual Gifts, The Solution to a Lack of Unity

I Corinthians 11:17-34

Thesis: Lack of discipline in the Corinthian church was causing division and factions to form.

Introduction

1. Paul ends chapter 4 with these two questions in verse 21, “What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in a spirit of gentleness?” Where might Paul begin with the Corinthian church who’s very name carried a strong cultural connotation as in “living like a Corinthian” which indicated indulging in a wild unrestrained life. And this was probably one of Paul’s concerns that they were living more like Corinthians than Christians. Where to start? Maybe with the example of agape love mentioned in chapter 13 or with addressing issues with the phrase “Now concerning…” six times before offering guidance on each issue. So let’s take a look at how Paul dealt with the problems of the Corinthian assembly.

Body

1. Conduct at the Lord’s Supper
	1. Exposition — The Corinthians were not coming together in unity when they were meeting as a church, but in factions and divisions in revelry, for political gain when feasting instead of observing the Lord’s Supper. (1 Corinthians 11:20-21)
	2. Illustration — When worshipping as a former pagan, they may have hosted a feast for a pagan god and invited others over to worship with them. Instead they were using the time to meet for individual gain or selfish purposes. (1 Corinthians 11:22, 27-34)
	3. Application — They should have been meeting together in unity, one mind, one body, to remember what Christ did for them. The purpose of the Lords Supper is to consciously call to mind what Jesus did for all of us on earth and when we obey the gospel and become His own, it is a weekly reminder that we focus on Him and Him alone. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). This is how we should observe the Lord’s Supper.
2. Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity
	1. Exposition — 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts (Paul is instructing them on how to use there own spiritual gifts in the assembly because of a lack of unity.) brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: 2 You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:1-3)
	2. Illustration — 4 There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit work all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
	3. Application — 12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12) 18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. (1 Corinthians 12:18) 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:28). Today we need to identify what our gift(s) are and contribute to the body in a Christ-like way.
3. The Solution to a Lack of Unity
	1. Exposition — 1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) Paul addresses the lack of unity and division with a detailed description of agape love.
	2. Illustration — 4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek it’s own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, rejoices in truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. 9 For we know in part and we prophecy in part. 10 But that which is perfect has come, that which is in part will be done away (opposite of remain). (1 Corinthians 13:4-10). Through the Holy Spirit, Paul gives the Corinthian church a detailed example of how they are supposed to interact with each other in the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Agape Love is the bonding and adhesive agent they need to fix the divisions and lack of unity they are displaying.
	3. Application — 11 When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but them I shall know just as I also am known. 13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. The application for us is to be one mind, one faith, one body, but most importantly, as we serve each other in the image of Christ, love each other as Christ loves God and us, His church.

Conclusion

1. Agape love gives itself completely with no thought of anything in return. It is the understanding, encouraging, and purposeful type of love. So when Paul encourages and corrects the Corinthian church for their lack of unity and division out of concern for the assembly he uses the most powerful tool Christ taught his disciples which was love. Love alone can protect the proper use of one’s gift’s that he or she has been blessed with by the Father and in service to, in a Christ like way which is a loving way, the congregation.