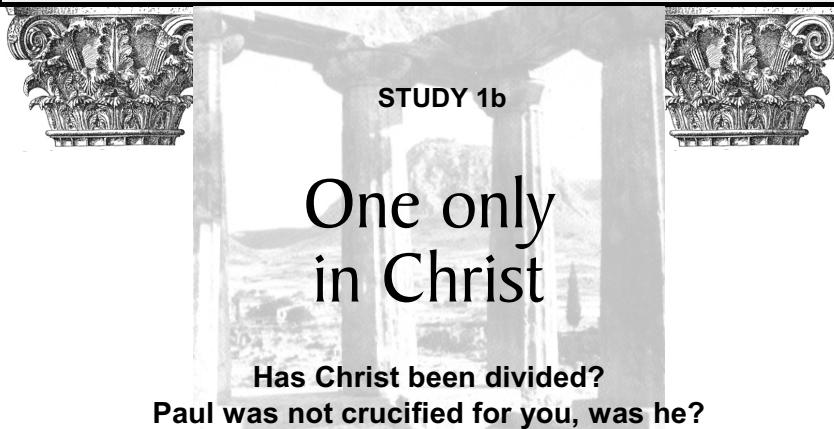


CORINTHIANS - THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY



Has Christ been divided?

Paul was not crucified for you, was he?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:13

Study 1a: What is a CHRISTIAN? (1:1-8)

1:1-3 What is Paul's definition of a saint?

[v.2] Paul was not called to be an apostle, he was an apostle ... And so you and I are not called to be saints, if we have trusted the Lord Jesus; we are saints, we are saints by calling. [Ironside 16]

To call upon the name of Christ is to put one's trust in him, and to address him in prayer and worship ... [Barrett 33]

[v.2] Holiness is the normal character of *all them that call on the name of the Lord*, says the apostle. This expression is evidently in his view the paraphrase of the term "believers." A Christian is therefore, according to him, a man who calls on the name of Jesus as his Lord. The term [epikaleistha] is applied in the Old Testament (by the LXX.) only to the invocation of Jehovah (Isa.43:7; Joel 2:32; Zech.13:9). Immediately after Pentecost, the name for believers was "they who call on the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:14,21; Rom.10:12,13); the name of Jesus was substituted in this formula for that of Jehovah in the Old Testament. The very word NAME, applied, as it is in these passages, to Jesus, includes the idea of a Divine Being; so when the Lord says of His angel, Ex.23:21, "My name is in him," that is to say, He makes this being His perfect revelation. The title *Lord* characterizes Jesus as the one to whom God has committed the universal sovereignty belonging to Himself; and the Church is, in the apostle's eyes, the community of those who recognize and adore Him as such. It is therefore on an act of adoration, and not on a profession of faith of an intellectual nature, that he makes the Christian character to rest. [Godet 45-46]

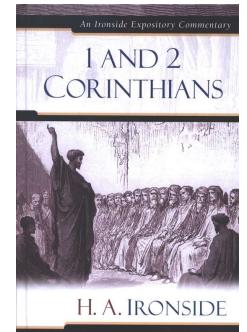
1:4-8 Note outstanding gifts of the grace of God; note also which omitted (Phil.1:9-11; Col.1:9-11)

[v.5] It is not by accident that the apostle only mentions here the speculative and

oratorical powers, and not the moral virtues; the *gifts* of the Spirit and not the *fruits* of the Spirit, as at Thessalonica. His intention is not doubtful; for in chap.13:8-13 he himself contrasts the two principal gifts of utterance, tongues, and prophecy, and then knowledge, as things which pass away, with the three things which abide: faith, hope, and love. [Godet 52]

We live in a day when there is a very unhealthy craving for what we may call "the miraculous gifts," and people have an idea that if these were more in evidence in the church there would be more spirituality and more accomplished for God. I think the history of the Corinthian church proves the unsoundness of such reasoning. No church that I know of has ever exceeded them in the grace of God in regard to gifts, and yet they were anything but a truly spiritual church ... [They] became so occupied with the gifts that they all wanted to do miraculous things, and so their eyes were taken off Christ and fixed upon manifestations, and they lost the sweetness of communion with Him. [Ironside 28,29]

[v.7] These various powers, which so often in Paul's writings bear the name of [charismata], *gifts of grace*, are certainly the effects of the supernatural life due to faith in Christ; but they fit in notwithstanding to pre-existing natural aptitudes ... The Holy Spirit does not substitute Himself for the human soul; He sanctifies it and consecrates its innate talents to the service of the work of salvation. By this new direction, He purifies and exalts them, and enables them to reach their perfect development. [Godet 55]



Study 1b: Whose Faithfulness Saves Us? (1:9)

1:9 Is there any IF in Christ? (Phil.1:6, 2:13)

We shall devote this study to a consideration of one verse, because it is altogether too important to be hurried over. It is really the fundamental affirmation of the whole letter. [Morgan 18]

The only evidence of election is therefore vocation, and the only evidence of vocation, is holiness of heart and life ... [Hodge 10]

The continuance of the favours mentioned in the preceding verses may be confidently looked for. The character of God is at stake ... The opening words of this Epistle reminded us that Paul's position as an apostle was due to the divine call. Now we see that there is a call to every believer. It is because God has called him and not because of his own initiative that he has become a Christian. [Morris 37,38]

Which fellowship is the only one that counts with God the Father?

[v.13] 'Into the name' implies entrance into fellowship and allegiance, such as exists between the Redeemer and the redeemed. [Robertson/Plummer 13]

Holiness is received, not achieved. [Conzelmann 21]



Study 1c: Christ & Sects Compatible? (1:10-17)

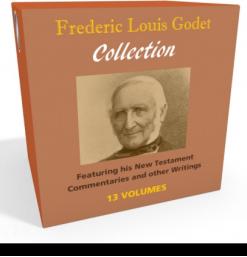
1:10-12 What word in Paul's exhortation makes ALL the difference in how we view those with whom we differ in the church? (3:1-4; 6:5,6)

[v.10] St Paul is urging, not unison, but harmony. [Robertson/Plummer 10]

[v.10] It is the eleventh that the name Jesus Christ appears, and we are at the tenth verse! [Godet 62]

[v.12] At the moment of enumerating these different parties, the apostle once again unites all the members of the Church under the one common and affectionate address, *my brethren*. [Godet 63]

[v.12] When the probable tendencies of the other parties mentioned here are compared with tendencies referred to in the general argument of the letter, a process of elimination suggests that the 'Christ party' consisted of the self-styled 'spiritual men', the *illuminati* [Bruce 33]



1:13-17 Though Christians may call *themselves* by various names, there is only one name that ultimately matters

Inside the church they claimed to be Christians still, and to hold the Christian truth, but they were quarrelling and were divided up, and were indulging, undoubtedly, in false emphases, putting false emphases upon partial truths, and forgetting the value of the whole truth ... They were all wrong. The trouble was, these people were gathering around some emphasis which in all likelihood was correct, but when the partial is made the whole, and cutting them off in fellowship of judgment of mind and utterance from others, then they were wronging the whole Church of God ... Anything which breaks in upon the unity of the Christ and His message has something in it that is wrong. [Morgan 28]

The guilt of these partisans did not lie in holding views differing from each other; it was not so much in saying, "This is the truth," as it was in saying, "This is *not* the truth:" for the guilt of schism is when each party, instead of expressing fully his own truth, attacks others, and denies that others are in the Truth at all ... party spirit is the death of love. Christianity is union amidst variety of views; party spirit is disunion ... [F. W. Robertson 26]

[v.17] The formation of parties at Corinth evidently rested on a false conception of the gospel, which converted it into the wisdom of a school. Paul restores the true notion of Christianity, according to which this religion is above all a fact, and its preaching the simple testimony rendered to the fact: the announcement of the blessed news of salvation [*evangelizesthai*]. [Godet 86]



F. W. Robertson

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Perseverance of the saints -- or the Saviour?

... the apostle had not the slightest thought that any one who had ever been born again would fail to reach heaven. He knew that many of them might fail previously on the way, but he knew also that they were responsible to keep themselves but that they were being kept by the power of God. People say to me, "Oh, you are one of those old-fashioned folk who believe in the perseverance of the saints." I generally answer, "To be perfectly frank, I am not at all conceited about the perseverance of the saints. My experience with myself and with a great many other saints is that most of us are not very much given to perseverance. We need to be prodded along all the time." I heard Sam Jones say he thought sometimes that the Lord allowed the Presbyterians to believe once saved always saved, and the Methodists, that you would only be saved at last if you hold on, because some of the Presbyterians are "such an ornery crowd" that they never would go on if they did not feel sure they were eternally saved, and some of the Methodists are such a poor type that if the Lord did not keep the whip over them, they would never go through. That could be said of a great many, but when we turn to the Word of God we find that everything for a Christian depends upon the perseverance of the Saviour. He who took us up in grace has undertaken to carry us through to the end ... You who have known the Lord for years, do I need to try to reason with you to show that God is faithful? As you look back over the years, do not all His dealings with you tell the story that you have had to do with a faithful God? And be assured that when we come to the end of the way, when at last we meet with loved ones round the throne, we shall realize then as never before the faithfulness of God. [Ironside 34,35]