

In the Same Mind and Judgment

Sunday, January 22, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### **1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

- ***Introduction: The scorpion and turtle-it is in my nature to sting***

There is a story that involves a scorpion and a turtle. One day a scorpion approached a turtle resting near a creek and asked a favor. "I cannot cross the creek on my own since I cannot swim and would drown. Would you please allow me to ride on your back as you swim across?" The turtle was hesitant. "Scorpions are dangerous," he said. "The venom in their sting would be deadly. You could kill me." The scorpion was quick to reply, "if I did something like that to you, you would sink as you die and I would be left to drown in the creek." The turtle considered this and decided that it was in the scorpion's best interest to be harmless, so he agreed. The turtle crawled to the water's edge and then the scorpion hopped on his back as he began to swim. All went well for awhile, but then the scorpion felt the urge to do what scorpions do, and he slipped his tail under the edge of the turtle's shell and stung him. Immediately, the turtle stopped swimming and slowly began to sink. Before his head went under the surface, he spoke. "You stung me, now I am dying, and you will drown. Why would you do such a thing?" The scorpion could only shake his head. "It's in my nature to sting." 1 Corinthians deals with conflict from the first chapter on, and sometimes it seems to indicate the main reason why there is conflicts, is because it is human nature, but there's a thought about how to deal with that tendency in this verse.

- ***Set the stage: factions based on baptism and a variety of other issues***

Paul wrote that he only baptized Crispus and Gaius, and, and, oh yes, the family of Stephanus and he is irked that even something like baptism could be used as an opportunity for strife. As mentioned in last Sunday's sermon, the church in Corinth apparently gave Paul more trouble than any other church. Set in the midst of the most decadent city in the Roman Empire, the church of Corinth was beset by divisions, including divisions over spiritual leaders, morality, lawsuits, marriage, food offered to idols, the roles of women in the church, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts and the resurrection. It seems that it is human nature to divide and argue, but once started it is not easily stopped. Part of what to do about this is in verse 10.

- ***Main point: the same mind and same judgment.***

The key for today is in the phrase "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment. I think that to mean that under a common commitment to Christ, we choose to prayerfully ponder the wisdom of Scripture and address disagreements and conflict as problems to be solved rather than victories to be won. In Isaiah 8 we find the great prophet confronted by people who mocked him for ignoring Scripture when they ignored it themselves. The result is grim. The passage indicated that those people would hate God, hate authority and be driven into darkness.

- ***Application: be perfectly joined together***

The application is to be “perfectly joined together”. It refers not to individual maturity but of maturity of the whole church. The word is used for the work of God in community, for worship, for healing, for repairing relationships, and for healing from wounds and recovery from moral failure. We don’t completely grow if we don’t grow together. Sometimes working through disagreements can move us forward if handled well. A highly-regarded Congregational pastor (Harry Butman) once wrote: “conflict is essentially ambivalent. It is bad when it adds to the crushing burden of pain and misery which the...inhabitants of this globe are now suffering. Conflict is good when it lessen that suffering, and it changes the dark minor key of the still, sad music of humanity’ to a bright C major chord-a grand Amen.”\*

- ***Conclusion***

Conflicts are always a risk for a church, or for any gathered community for that matter. It seems to be part of human nature, however destructive it may be. Once division become part of church life, it runs the risk of taking over all of church life. The wise response is to seek to problem solve in conflict rather than simply try to win a never-ending argument. Prayerfully turn to the wisdom of Scripture and know that for all of us to grow to our full potential we need to grow together and not as individuals alone.

\*page 30, Why Do Church People Fight Rev. Harry R. Butman, D.D. Congregational Press, Oak Creek, Wisconsin, 2004

