Jesus is King and Shepherd the Rest of us are Subjects and Sheep

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Today two legends will be dualling on the gridiron. Maybe it is just me, but I love that there will be a 42 year old and a 43 year quarterback battling to get into the playoffs.



Everyone’s got their favorite quarterback. Some pick a favorite based on personality, or charisma, or maybe the causes they stand for. Another person might choose a favorite based on raw talent, or their ability to stand strong in the pocket. Or maybe you prefer a quarterback who can scramble over one who has a lightning bolt for a right arm? You might even choose your favorite quarterback based on who your favorite team is.

Whatever our reasoning for choosing a favorite quarterback, it should never diminish a true football fans’ love of the game.

It’s okay for football lovers everywhere to have favorite teams and players. But even with different favorites we can be united on the joy that we get from a classic goal line to goal line battle!

Why do I bring this up?

Because the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1, beginning with verse 10, was addressing divisions between Christians that came about because they were divided about who was the best preacher out there. Please follow along with me…

“10 I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. 11 For some members of Chloe’s household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. 12 Some of you are saying, “I am a follower of Paul.” Others are saying, “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Peter,” or “I follow only Christ.”

13 Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. 16 (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don’t remember baptizing anyone else.) 17 For Christ didn’t send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power.”

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Paul is saying something very simple and very profound. Ultimately, he is saying “It is all about following after Jesus and loving God.”

Christianity is not about preferences, favorite preaching styles and other disputable issues. It is about following Jesus. And what you will find in the church is that different churches and individual Christians have differing emphasis in Christ’s mission to each other and to the world.

Some Christian leaders emphasize their need to be an example of excellence.

Others are about being authentic and letting their faults be evident.

Some Christian leaders are known for technical language and highly detailed teaching.

On the other hand, some rely on story telling and highly allegorical explanations of spiritual things.

Which is better?

I will answer that by saying, “Some quarterbacks are scramblers others are known for having lightning bolts for arms and standing strong in the pocket.”

The church in Corinth was experiencing divisions because instead of just expressing their preferences, and celebrating the diversity of their teachers, people were acting like following their teacher was the only way to do Christianity.

It seems that some of the people really believed that eloquent speaking and convincing with wisdom was the key to a good leader. And for them Apollos was the guy. The book of Acts recorded that he was an eloquent speaker and asserts:

“…he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God’s grace, had believed. 28 He refuted the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.”

Acts 18:24; 27-28 NLT

Then there were the teachings of Peter. He was probably most popular with those who were of Jewish descent, due to the fact that he seemed to hold the Jewish traditions and customs a little tighter than the Apostle Paul. As Paul had wrote to the Galatians…

“11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. 12 When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. 13 As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter’s hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

14 When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?”

Galatians 2:11-14

Eloquent speaking wasn’t the epitome of Christianity, Jewish tradition wasn’t the key, and Paul has just been clear that he wasn’t the one to be focusing on. Remember he asks the rhetorical question:

“Was I crucified for you?”

Paul seemed to be the favorite among the gentile and the common person…His ministry in Corinth was self-proclaimed to be without eloquence and words of wisdom. Remember this does not mean that Paul never used eloquence and words of wisdom. But he does seem to imply that when it comes to being saved…with regard to putting your faith in the Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection. It doesn’t depend on fancy arguments and intellectual genius. As He goes on to write to the Corinthians…

“18 The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. 19 As the Scriptures say,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise

and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.”

20 So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world’s brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. 21 Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. 22 It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. 23 So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it’s all nonsense.”

1 Corinthians 1:18-23 NLT

The Jews were “offended” because the message of the cross declared them as sinners who were unrighteous and in need of a Savior. They believed themselves to be superior to others and on a fast track to God.

The Gentiles discussed in verse 23, the one’s who believed the gospel to be all nonsense, were probably the intellectuals who stuffed their notions of God because logic and the science didn’t fit for them. The intelligence of those who were against God was going to be blown up, when it came to the fundamental need of the human heart and soul.

No matter how smart you are, no matter how traditional, moral, ethical, or spiritual you are, no matter how closely you follow bible teachers; trusting in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is the only way to have rest in your soul. And it is the one thing that unites all Christians everywhere.

Some churches emphasize the health and welfare of society, that is an important aspect of Christianity.

Some churches emphasize the acceptance and necessity of certain doctrinal beliefs.

Some churches emphasize intellectual growth and achievement.

Some focus on having political influence in the world.

Some put a big emphasis on sexual identity politics.

Some are focused on adoption.

Some are all about recovering from sin. While others try to help their members rest in the reality of sin.

Some churches actually believe that they have everything covered, and if you just follow their example then you will do church the right way.

What are churches, pastors, and Christians supposed to be about?

We are supposed to be representatives of Jesus, but none of us are truly all things to all people. That is why God wants each of us to be who he created us to be and in our humanness we (Just like the teachers that were in Corinth) will all have different things we emphasize and excel at in our lives.

For example, we need Christians who teach about the intricacy and uniqueness of unborn life.

And just as much, we need Christians who are going to show love, mercy and support to women who are grieving and hurting because they are a single mother or maybe because they had an abortion.

We need Christians and churches who are going to show unconditional love to those who are in poverty and we need Christians and churches who are going to show tough love to people who are trying to get a free ride from the welfare system.

Some churches will be highly intellectual.

Some highly emotional.

Others will go for balance.

Some quarterbacks are scramblers, others have thunderbolts for arms.

Let me finish today by giving you three suggestions.

One, celebrate and appreciate the different kinds of Christians and church emphasis that God has in the world.

Two, ask God to help you live according to the mission He has given you.

Number 3, never forget that Christians everywhere are truly united by one person and His work; Jesus. There truly is only one faith, one Lord, and one baptism and that is the bond that is to be held high above all of our diversity of methods an missions.

So what does it mean to be united under one faith, one Lord and one baptism?

The short answer is that all of us have come to know that we are unable to be perfectly loving to God and others and all of us need someone or something to save us from the guilt, shame, and punishment that comes from that condition.

As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans:

“20 For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. 24 Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. 25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, 26 for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.”

Romans 3:20-26 NLT

This is what unites all believers everywhere and it doesn’t matter whether they are pocket passers, dual-threat quarterbacks, or scramblers. Leaders all have their own styles for the benefit of God’s church, find our unity in Jesus who created us all to represent Him as unique individuals who are loved and saved by Him.