



Pastor W. L. Brown, Sermon notes, Carmichael Baptist Church, 2011

Unseemly Wranglings

I Corinthians 1:11, *“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.”*

“Unseemly wranglings” as opposed to profitable discussions are the words Robertson uses in his Word Pictures to explain the Greek word “eris.” It gives us the picture of intense and provocative arguments that lead to division. We might use words such as power struggles, squabbling, and bickering to help us understand what these “contentions” actually are. Sadly they are a part of our personal life and our church life. God has given us a view of the problem and the proposal to fix it. Maybe we can learn a biblical principal and also learn how to avoid these unseemly wranglings.

I. The Text

A. Define the term

1. Contentions, I Cor. 1:11; Tit. 3:9; our original English word comes from “contend” to stretch out or to strive after; to stretch one’s self in order to hold on to something. The idea is that quarrelling had taken hold and prevailed. They would not let it go.
2. Debate, Rom. 1:29; II Cor. 12:20; came from two words in the English 14th century, to “beat down;” from English words meaning down completely and battery. It is sin (vs. 21).
3. Strife, Rom. 13:13; Phil. 1:15; I Tim. 6:4; strife’s etymology is from combat, to stride which means to fight; to strive, to make a strong effort to take something. I Cor. 3:3, the source of their “wranglings” came as a result of their being “fleshly.” Strife exposes a carnal like walk.
4. Variance, Gal. 5:20; “state of disagreement” “the state of being different.” It is a work of the flesh;

it lowers others to exalt self. Men who are spiritual (I Cor. 2:14-15) follow a different course in life.

B. Classify the attitude

1. It is listed as a work of the flesh, Gal. 5:19. Which means the flesh is in control for its product to exist. The Christians at Corinth had displaced Christ for self; it is a manifestation of self exaltation. Your opinion matters most!
2. The spiritual man won't strive or contend, or combat; he will discern, he has the ability to investigate and must "*be renewed in the spirit of your mind.*" (Eph 4:23). His way of thinking is not selfish or self-centered (Eph. 4:17-24). We have once and for all removed that old man and are continually putting on the new man; which we do solely by grace, (Eph 2:5-10). Which mind governs your actions? Which mind animates your attitude? The fleshly mind leads to emptiness, to delusion. Strife leads to failure.
3. It is considered as a vice, II Cor. 12:20; Rom. 19:19; I Tim. 6:4. It is only overcome by the "renewing of the mind" after we have dedicated ourselves to the Lord, (Rom. 12:102). Dedication is a proper response to the grace and mercy God has extended to us. Discernment and direction are a result of our continued elevation of God's will over ours and dedication to follow that will.

II. The Tact

A. Was direct

1. Paul named the source of his information and that source needed no further explanation to the church at Corinth. It was not gossip and it was not a secret. Naming his source tells us the information was unimpeachable.

2. Divisions are destructive, it exposes the body as being out of joint or disjointed in contrast to a proper aim or goal of every church, (I Cor. 1:10). They had divided opinions and there were these unseemly wranglings.
 3. Your testimony, your communications should not be about your divisions or differences, but speak the same things. It does not call for absolute silence, or even compromise of essential truth, but a unified collective voice.
- B. Was personal
1. This was not one of the questions posed or proposed to Paul by the Church.
 2. They had other priorities, but Paul let them know this was a danger and this bickering threatened their survival, their peace, and their spiritual prosperity.
 3. Is Christ divided? Who died for you, in who name where you baptized? (I Cor. 1:13). How were you called, (1:26)?

III.The Test

- A. It can't be about man, vs. 12
1. I am of Apollos, I am of Paul, and everyone had their personality they liked best. (I Cor. 4:6)
 2. B. H. Carroll, in his "Interpretation of the English Bible" says there were "eight ecclesiastical disorders." In this disorder (factions) they were dividing over style rather than substance; Apollos the eloquent, or Paul the powerful?
 3. Contentions, strife, or being in a state of disagreement come when Christ is not at the center of our life and our church life. They were making personalities the primary focus and that can destroy a church.

4. Their way of thinking and their way of talking was not of the same mind.
- B. It must be about Christ, I Cor. 2:1-2
1. If you are going to contend for something it must be about Christ, the gospel, and “the” faith.
 2. Paul encouraged them to look back at their own calling (1:26) and see what made the difference.
 3. It was Christ who changed them, it was the gospel that told them about the blood of Christ at Calvary that would make them clean. It wasn’t the excellent oratory of Apollos. It was the gospel preached simply but in power.
 4. Their voice as a church must be one of harmony and keeping Christ at the center will eliminate personal pride; i.e. my view must prevail.
 5. It is the spirit of superiority that leads to contentions and strife. We do not have to agree on everything, but our voice must be singular in presenting one gospel and one Christ.
 6. The church, and the church is made up of sinners, must have a goal of being “*perfectly joined together in the same mind.*” This means we must be “repaired” or “adjusted” or “fitted” to one another. (See Mat. 4:21, “*mending their nets.*”).
 7. Our interpersonal relationships often need mending, adjustment and repairs. The church will always have problems and challenges as long as it is made up of saved sinners. When we become aware of the problem we need to make the appropriate Christ honoring adjustments to those whom God has called to walk with us.