

## Churches That Exalt & Honor Men

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by Bill Crews

To “the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1 :2), the apostle Paul wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:10-12). The Christians that composed the church at Corinth were obviously divided and beset by contentions (strifes, wranglings), and it was manifested by their setting themselves apart over various men who were preachers and teachers of the gospel. Some were **improperly** saying, “I am of Paul,” others, “I am of Apollos,” and others, “I am of Cephas,” while some were **correctly** saying, “I am of Christ” (But they may have been improperly promoting factionalism. No one, however, can please God without being “of Christ”). Paul asks, rhetorically, “**Is Christ divided?**” Then neither should His followers be. He asks, “Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?” (1 : 13). Then why should anyone be saying, “I am of Paul”?

Surely we will all agree that the apostle was condemning the situation at Corinth. And the solution would not be found in agreeing upon which *man's* name they would wear. It would not become acceptable should the whole congregation agree in saying, “I am of Paul,” or, “I am of Apollos,” or, “I am of Cephas.” The names of men should not be worn, period. And what was wrong at Corinth would be wrong on a broader scale if those who constituted the church at Philippi were united in saying, “We are of Paul,” and those who constituted the church at Thessalonica were united in saying, “We are of Cephas,” and those who constituted the church at Corinth were united in saying, “We are of Apollos.” Again, the names of men should not be worn. Martin Luther, the great sixteenth century reformer, referred to this very passage (1 Corinthians 1: 13 when he pled with those who agreed with his preaching to wear the name of Christ rather than the name of Luther. In spite of this, there are today several churches that proudly call themselves “**Lutherans**” and insist that Martin Luther is their founder.

Anyone who is slightly acquainted with the contents of the New Testament knows that all of Christ's followers are referred to as “*saints*” (“set apart ones”; see, for example, Acts 9:13,32; 26:10; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1 :2; Ephesians 1: 1; Philippians 1: 1; Colossians 1 :2). It was the Roman Catholic practice and influence that led to calling the writers of the New Testament books, “Saint Matthew,” “Saint Mark,” “Saint Luke,” “Saint John,” “Saint Paul,” “Saint James,” “Saint Peter” and “Saint Jude” (and “Saint” is always capitalized). This is seen in the titles given to the New Testament books in some English translations, but nowhere is it found in the actual text of the New Testament.

Ignoring the teaching of 1 Corinthians 1: 10-13 and 3:1-4 (*please read this one*) and adopting the Roman Catholic practice, many congregations in our day are named, “Saint Luke's ... Church,” “Saint John the Divine ... Church,” “Saint Peter's ... Church,” “Saint Jude's ... Church,” “Saint Paul's ... Church,” etc. Is God pleased with this? Would those wonderful servants of God from the first century have approved? Still others have attached the names of “Abraham,” “Israel,” “King David” and “King Solomon” to churches that profess to be made of Christians and profess to honor Christ. Let's call Bible things by Bible names, and let's respect Bible exhortations and admonitions.

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