

THE MIND OF CHRIST IN PAUL'S RESPONSES TO THE PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH IN CORINTH

BY JOHN PESTER

In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses a series of problems in the church in Corinth, beginning with the matter of division and continuing with a broad array of other problems throughout the remainder of the Epistle. In dealing with the first problem—division—Paul establishes a pattern that governs his response to each problem in Corinth: he manifests the mind of Christ to whom he is joined as one spirit. In the context of his response to a particular problem, he often asks a question that reveals the mind of Christ and his identification with it. These questions emanate from the mind of Christ, which is active and operating in Paul's renewed mind. His thinking is not based on Christ's mind in an objective or imitative way; it is actually the mind of Christ, the mind of the person to whom he is joined. In the details of his responses, he also exposes the unrenewed minds of the Corinthians, which reflect a reliance upon the wisdom of the age rather than the wisdom of God—Christ.

Paul's Manifestation of the Mind of Christ in Dealing with the Problem of Division

In the section dealing with divisions, which extends from 1:10 to 4:21,¹ Paul begins his discussion by writing, "I beseech you, brothers, through 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 attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion" (1:10). In the middle of the section, following a seemingly tangential discourse on the wisdom of God being demonstrated through the foolishness of preaching the word of the cross, which stands in contradistinction to the wisdom of the age upon which the Corinthians relied, Paul writes, "Who has known the mind of the Lord and will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" (2:16). There is an intrinsic, experiential connection between the phrase *attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion* in 1:10 and the phrase *the mind of Christ* in 2:16 because being attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion, which alone can solve the problem of division, is possible only when a believer's mind is not fashioned according to this age but, rather, is being transformed by the renewing of the mind to become the mind of Christ (Rom. 12:2).²

By bookending his discussion of wisdom with a reference to being attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion with a reference to the mind of Christ, Paul establishes a pattern for dealing with the problems in Corinth according to the mind of Christ rather than the wisdom of the age. It is impossible for unrenewed minds that are filled with the many permutations of the wisdom of the age to be attuned in the same opinion, because differing opinions, the source of these permutations, abound and are even promoted.

In regard to the initial problem of divisions in the church in Corinth, different opinions were the root cause of the divisions. Consequently, Paul points out that the same mind and same opinion that were needed to solve the divisions in the church could be