



## Searching for a Winner: Doctrine of Unity: Paul Challenges the Corinthians to Achieve “Exoterike Harmonia,” 1 Cor 1:10a

Paul’s challenge to aspire to *exoterike harmonia* is found in:

**1 Corinthians 1:10** - Now I exhort you, fellow believers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

If order is to be restored in the Corinthian church then its members must come into harmony with the righteous standards of God’s Word. Paul first implores that they “all agree,” the present active subjunctive of the verb:

**λέγω, legō** - “to be in agreement”

This verb means, “to speak,” “to say,” or to give oral expression. However, in this context, the verb also makes reference to the thought that crafts the spoken word. For Paul to implore the Corinthians to “say” the same thing means that they first must “think” the same thing. To do this they must be in “agreement” about spiritual matters.

If this is accomplished then it will bring to an end the divisions that presently plague the church. The word is the noun:

**σχίσμα, schisma** - “to split, divide, tear, or crack”

Failure to agree on doctrine ultimately leads to division, dissension, and schisms in the local church. Paul’s admonition against such divisions is indicated by his inclusion of the negative particle, **μή, mē**: “no.”

The Corinthians are not in agreement and thus there is dissension in the church. Paul’s desire is that this should stop by means of their unity of thought and when accomplished church unity would be the permanent result. His desire is introduced by a conjunction of contrast, **δέ, de**, translated “but,” and is followed by the perfect passive participle of the verb:

**καταρτίζω, katartizō** - “to put in a proper condition; to be put in order; to restore”

The only way a congregation can become organized with regard to its thinking is by positive volition toward and inculcation of the guiding principles of the Word of God.

Many people do not like authority. They will not submit to a system or to those who have the duty of managing a system.

Such individuals think it beneath them and in arrogance assume that to obey orders, submit to superiors, and behave in community is an insult to them personally.

Such an attitude is extremely self-centered, the person who possesses it has an inflated opinion of self, and as a result they are completely self-absorbed. However, when they decide to direct an effort, or accomplish an objective, or promote a project, since they are self-absorbed they cannot lead others except by intimidation, ridicule, and coercion. Those who cannot be led become bullies when they are in control.



Such attitudes express a way of thinking that is highly subjective and based on a false interpretation of self. This is the product of inordinate self-esteem that emphasizes the individual and his wishes and desires as superior to the collective good of community.

The false premise is that man is an island and can set his own rules. But if these rules are in opposition to God's righteous standards then his system will fail even though he assumes his rules are both rational and brilliant.

Therefore in a local church, if you have self-centered people who assume that their individual wishes and desires are sacrosanct, they will not be willing to come into harmony with the group. There is no way that the members of any group will agree on issues of personal opinion or preference—some prefer classical music while others opt for Bluegrass. But, on matters spiritual, there must be unity of thought followed by collective agreement if *exoterike harmonia* is to be accomplished.

This is extremely difficult to accomplish today. The population has been so steeped in human-viewpoint thinking that it makes it extremely difficult for those who believe in Christ to submit to the authority of God and His Word. As a result they go astray into the "traditions of men":

**Colossians 2:8** - See to it that no one takes you prisoner through the agency of philosophical propaganda and deceitful lies, according to the standards of the traditions of men and according to the standards of the elements of the world, and not according to the standards of Christ.

Paul warns Timothy to be aware of these things which cause his parishioners to go astray:

**1 Timothy 6:20** - O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"—

**v. 21** - which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.