

1Corinthians 17-11-12b

Let's resume our study now, and we're fully read into the picture here in terms of the environment and the history that Paul has with this group. And he reminds them, first and foremost, of the testimony of Christ. So now, let me ask you this.

In our day, we have many things in common with Corinth. We, just by virtue of technology, all of us, regardless of where we live, you know, Patty and I are now way out in the sticks, but still, because of television, because of the internet, because of media, you're exposed to the cosmopolitan world of ideas, argumentation, presentation, people advocating one position and another, and trying to support it with various levels of argument. The argument can be of varying quality.

I would strongly suggest that all of us regularly review the more common types of logical fallacy, because so many things that are being promulgated today partake, in some cases, egregiously so, of fallacious, i.e., faulty, unsound, it-does-not-follow kind of arguments. The fallacy of false cause. I prayed last night that the sun would rise, and it rose this morning.

See, I made the sun rise. You use absurd examples to remember the names, the fallacy of division, the fallacy of composition. One of them says, because the exhaust pipe is hot, the whole car is hot, because one Christian does something bad, all Christians are not to be trusted, type of thing.

And then the opposite is, you argue from the whole to one part, because the car is blue, the exhaust pipe is blue. Well, no. Just because most Christians don't know their Bible doesn't mean that you, as a Christian, don't know your Bible.

And these need to be stopped as soon as someone uses a faulty argument as a premise. If you let them get away with that, you're never going to be able to make a cogent point. You're never going to be able to speak the truth in a way that it can be appreciated, because you're on quicksand from the outset.

As soon as someone introduces a false premise, stop them right there. You know, if they say, well, you know, when Moses built the ark, stop them right there. Moses didn't build the ark.

Bezalel and Aholia built the ark. That ark. Noah built the first ark, right? But that type of thing.

But here's the point. Our culture thrives on establishing a truth. And in the postmodern world, all they have to do is get you to buy off on your truth.

Well, you know, this is my truth, and you can have your truth. They don't want to talk about an absolute truth. The essence of postmodernism, and this is all you have to know.

I mean, the philosophy you could spend your life studying philosophy and thinking about all the guys in the past and Plato and Socrates and Kierkegaard and all the rest of it. Here's what you

need to know right now. In the postmodern world, all recognition of transcendent truth is done away with.

There is no absolute. There's no absolute right and wrong. Certainly is no God.

The modern world did away with absolute truth. The postmodern world does away with the sources of absolute truth. It's all relative.

It's what it means to you. If I feel like a girl today, I want you to use the feminine pronoun. If I feel like a boy tomorrow, use the masculine pronoun.

I'll let you know my preferred pronoun because that's my truth. If I say I'm a girl, then I'm a girl. If I say I'm from the planet Zot, then you need to respect me as an alien visitor.

And accord me the respect that I'm due as an interstellar traveler. This is the postmodern world in a nutshell. What is Paul talking about here? What is an absolute, inviolable, unshakable, irrefutable truth? It is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

He has laid the foundation for this argument. Don't let yourself be shifted off of that foundation. Don't get into endless wrangling about words.

Don't get into apologetical arguments about, well, is it valid or is it not, to say that miracles took place in the past? This, that, and the other. The essential truth. Now, it's fine to have discussions.

It's fine to address issues. All of us do this. Some of us more than others.

But never let yourself get pulled off of the central baby action, which is the testimony of Jesus Christ. If you want to talk to somebody about a relationship with God, it is the person and work of Jesus Christ. That's the issue.

Sin, righteousness, and judgment. That's what God the Holy Spirit concerns Himself with. You remember Jesus talking about that in the upper room? John chapters 14 through 16.

When the Holy Spirit comes, He will convict the world. The issues are sin, righteousness, and judgment, and the Lord Jesus as the resolution of each of those three areas. Sin, righteousness, and judgment.

What is the Christian triad of virtues that answers those? Instead of sin, we have faith and righteousness by faith. Where there's righteousness, that's love. Love is the means by which we express righteousness toward others.

We reflect God's righteousness. Judgment, we have hope. We're not motivated by judgment.

We're motivated by hope. We're not trying to establish our own righteousness. We are seeking to love the Lord our God and love one another.

We are not worried about our sins. We are worried about being faithful and expressing our faith. Instead of sin, righteousness, and judgment, we have faith, hope, and love.

Instead of three negatives, we have three positives. But they all center in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is what changes sin, righteousness, and judgment into faith, hope, and love.

It is the testimony of Jesus Christ. Don't let yourself get dragged into endless disputings. You can have disputings, but they can't be endless.

Say, look, we can talk all day about whether or not Adam had a belly button, but have you thought about Jesus Christ? There is a day of judgment coming. It is appointed for man once to die, and after that, the judgment. And because there is a God, and because there is an afterlife, and because there is an absolute standard of righteousness that we cannot meet in and of ourselves, Christ, it's His person, and it is His work.

That's what you, oh correspondent, need to address. That's what you need to think about. How many bones are there in the rocks? How many background radiation levels are there in the post-Big Bang universe? How much dark matter is there? That's all fine.

We can talk about that. It's fun to banter those things back and forth. But if you're talking seriously, there's only one issue.

It's the testimony of Jesus Christ. Paul spent two years building that foundation for this group. So now, verse four.

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God, which was given to you by means of Christ Jesus. You were enriched in everything by Him by means of utterance and knowledge. That came through the Apostle Paul.

Even as the testimony of Christ was established, babayo. And that's an heiress, by the way. It's e-babayo for you Greek folks.

A little epsilon at the beginning. That makes it an heiress. Happened in the past so that you come short in no gift.

You're not lacking. These disputes, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, are the insinuation that, well, you don't have what I have. I've got something you don't have.

Paul says, if you go back to the foundation, you go back to the testimony of Christ, you don't lack anything. And he's going to say further on. Remember, all things are yours in Christ.

He's going to return to this idea a little bit later in the letter. Eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's what you ought to be thinking about.

Don't get your eyes on people. Don't get your eyes on yourself. Don't get your eyes on your circumstances here in Corinth.

Keep your eyes on the prize. Keep your eyes on the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. How ready am I for that? How prepared am I? How appreciative will I be? How much do I know about the person and work of Christ? How much do I remember out of the Bible classes that Paul taught here for a couple of years? He will babayo you to the end.

I feel uncertain. My circumstances are in flux. Don't know where my job is.

Don't know if my house is going to sell. Don't know where my money is going to come from. Don't know if my health is going to hold up.

There's a lot of uncertainty in all of our lives. Where is the stability? You focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Latch onto that babayo testimony and He will babayo you right back.

You recognize the established truth of Christ. He will establish you. You confirm in your heart what you know about the Lord Jesus.

He will confirm you to the end. It's very simple. You don't have to be erudite.

You don't have to be a logical genius. You don't have to understand a lot of highfalutin arguments on this, right? Focus on the Lord Jesus. He'll focus on you.

Believe in the Lord Jesus. He'll believe in you. You look to the Lord Jesus.

He'll be looking to you. It's just that simple. Because He is the doorway to the Father.

And we can come boldly before the throne of grace and find help in time of need. Notice verse 9. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son. You weren't called to the fellowship of Paul or the fellowship of any other person or any other denomination or any other philosophy or speculative point of view.

You were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And that goes all the way back. Remember when He said, their Lord and ours? Up there in verse 2. Jesus Christ, our Lord.

You are a part of the company of the saints. You are a unity. All of these verses, these first nine verses, there's nothing but unity.

You all. Look at what you're a part of. Don't try to partition yourself off and say, well, I'm not partaking of you over here and you're not partaking of me over there.

Look at the, you know, till we all come to the unity of the faith. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and one Father. Father of us all in Ephesians.

You remember that? So He's reminding them. Remember our memory verse. To the extent that things are noble, lovely, good report, true, honest.

Think on these things. We always have a choice. We can focus on those things that tend to divide and separate or we can focus on those things that tend to unify and help us cohere.

Doesn't mean that we don't make a distinction. But are you going to rend and tear? And that's what He's going to talk about now. Verse 10.

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. What is name? What is name? What do we know about this? Is it just, you know, in the name of justice, in the name of world peace? Name is reputation, right? It's the person at work. It's the testimony.

The name of Jesus Christ is another way of saying the testimony of Jesus Christ. Those are synonyms. Now, what did Jesus tell the soon-to-be apostles in Matthew 28, 19 and 20? As you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the reputation of, the knowledge of, the testimony of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptize them in the testimony. Immerse them in the testimony. Help establish the bio, that foundation.

A simple ritual dunking isn't what's in view. Immerse them like you would a freshly forged sword. Baptizo in the water to temper it, to give it an edge that can hold.

Stabilize it. You've been hammering away on hot iron, hot steel. You baptizo it.

You immerse it. You temper it. Well, baptizo, Jesus said to his 11 apostles, you immerse them in the testimony of the Father, the testimony of the Son, the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

They need to know these things. It's not swelling words of wisdom. These guys were tradesmen, fishermen.

None of them had been to college. They didn't need it. You who have been with me from the beginning will be the ones who will testify.

Remain in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high. The Holy Spirit will give you the words you need to say when you need to say them. That pattern continues.

I plead with you, brethren, brethren. He doesn't say, I plead with you, you various different groups. I plead with you, brethren, by the testimony, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How many times has he said, Lord Jesus Christ? If you want to talk about lordship, it's not at the point of salvation. It's at the point of followership. It's at the point of service and obedience.

What does the Lord say to do? Stick together. Be of one mind, one heart. You all speak the same thing.

I spoke to you. You were enriched by means of utterance and wisdom. You all need to be speaking that wisdom, that those utterances.

What I pass along to you, you should pass along to others. Paul explicitly tells Timothy this. The testimony that you've received, that's what you communicate.

You don't have to elaborate it. You don't have to add to it. You don't have to amend it.

You don't have to put a bunch of bill of rights on it or any of the rest of it. What you received, Paul says, that's what I do. I pass along to you what I first received.

The Lord Jesus Christ on the same night that he was betrayed. It's coming up in this letter. Speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you.

You might think that this would be schisms or something like that. I was kind of looking for the word schism, but it's not schism. This is a different word.

Well, it actually is schisma. That there be no schism among you. What I'm thinking of is in the next verse down in 11, where there are contentions among you.

This is that there be no schismata. You talk about stigmata. Well, this is schismata.

You know what a schism is. It's a rift. It's a tear.

He's not saying that there be no factions among you. Now, think about this. If you take something and tear it, take the veil of the temple and you tear it, there's two ways you can look at that.

You can say, well, now I've got two pieces of veil. Or you can say, I've got one veil that's got a tear in it. You either focus on what's left over after it is torn or you focus on the tear itself.

We had a giant bonfire and cinders and things were being wafted into the air. And one of these hot cinders, unbeknownst to me, came right down. It was cold and I had outer clothing on.

Some kind of way, it went inside my collar and I had on my C.F. Martin and Company long sleeve sort of, it's like the top of a set of long handles. Yeah, it's a waffle weave type of a thing. Really like that.

And I had a Grace and Truth Bible Church t-shirt under that. Layers, you know. I had my coat on.

I had my Martin Waffle thing and I had my Grace and Truth t-shirt underneath. Well, this cinder, unbeknownst to me, somehow got down inside the collar of my coat. Got between my Martin Waffle long sleeve shirt, collarless shirt, and my Grace and Truth shirt.

And burned a hole in the Grace and Truth shirt, my skin is next, and the C.F. Martin thing. I never knew it until I undressed that night. And as I took off my coat, I looked and here's a hole in my, right there, right below where it says C.F. Martin and Company, there's this hole with neatly sealed off edges.

And I take that off and there's a hole in my Grace and Truth Bible Church right in the center. Now, I can either look at the shirt or I can look at the hole. Schismata looks at the tear.

It's not looking at the quality of what's left on either side. Paul isn't saying, let there be no groups among you. Let there be no cliques among you.

He's saying, you should be one group. There shouldn't be any crack, any tear, any rift, any separation. Schismata looks at the separation itself, not the nature of what got separated.

And that's really important because we tend to focus on, well, they speak in tongues. Well, they believe this or they believe that. That may be true.

And we may not believe in that. And we may consider some of these differences. If they don't believe in the deity of Christ, if they don't believe that Jesus was real, they think he was a hallucination or something, okay, fine.

But I am not going to focus on condemning them because of what they don't understand. I am going to focus on, am I responsible for a schism? If there's going to be a schism, that's a different thing than, hey, you're wrong about this, or maybe I'm wrong about something and they've got it right. And they're looking over at me, judging me because I'm immature.

Maybe I believe in something that's not biblically sound. Paul doesn't say, make sure your doctrines are all exactly correct. He says, I plead with you, don't let there be this tear.

Don't let there be. Well, if somebody else is doing the tearing, I can't help that. But I can avoid making a tear myself.

Now, all scriptural truths are balanced by other scriptural truths. Is there a time to separate? Are there times when we spend time in fellowship with a group and we say, this isn't the group for me? All of us have visited churches and we say, you know, I just really can't in good conscience continue to fellowship here. It's just too different.

They're going in this direction. We're going in this direction. And yes, we're all believers.

Well, we may not continue fellowship, but discontinuing attendance or association and so on, you can do that without there being a tear. You can be in two places doing two different things, but you didn't rip anything. You didn't destroy something when you separated.

That's what Paul is talking about. He says, look, if you've got different emphases, you understand things differently, that's fine, but let there be no tear. You see the difference.

Don't be responsible for ripping the fabric of the body of Christ. Yes, the whole body is not an ear or a nose or a thumb or a kneecap, but don't start destructive types of separation. You can be distinct.

You can have your understanding. You can go your own way. But as you do that, don't leave destruction in your wake.

Don't damage just because you see things differently. So schismata, it's really important to

understand this, and he's going to go on and give this other word here in a minute. Notice, there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Now, you think, oh, well, we've all got to have the same mind and have the same judgment. No, he says the joint that you don't rip is where your mind and judgment are the same. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever the things are lovely, to the extent that things are of good report, think on these things.

Yeah, I'm not going to continue going to this particular denominational church. We've tried it. It's not a good fit.

We tend to have to work on not vibrating the whole time we're there. That's fine. But you know what? I will smile and shake hands with those folks because they believe that Jesus is Lord.

They believe that Jesus died for our sins. They understand that God, the Holy Spirit, is the means by which we live the Christian life. They respect the teaching of the Word of God.

There are so many things that we have in common. And so where we are of common mind, where we have the same judgment about the importance of Jesus Christ, the centrality of relationship with God, I will never let that tear. You see the difference? We don't have to be like-minded with everybody.

And somebody's not at fault if we have a different understanding. We focus on what is common. Be perfectly joined together in the same mind.

Where you have the same mind, be joined. Where you have the same judgment, be joined. Don't say, well, yeah, I know you love the Lord Jesus, but I can't talk to you.

You know, you foot wash. I just think that foot washing is embarrassing and heinous. I could, anybody that foot washes, I'd be joined together.

Recognize there is a family bond there. Yeah, you're not going to be friends. You're just family.

Sometimes friends are closer than family. Sometimes family is your friends. But don't let there be a rift.

Where you can find common ground, be joined there. Focus on that. Think on these things.

And the peace of God that passes understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That's the connection. Yeah, the hand is not a shoulder, but it's connected.

It's not connected by every other part of the body, but there is a connection. Just focus on the part that works, on the part that's good. It has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

And this is the second word. This is eris, E-R-I-S. And here the plural is erides, erides.

It's translated debates. Oh, what's the harm in debate? Contentions, variances, wranglings. There are wranglings.

So now what are we saying? With fellow believers. Isn't this very practical, don't you think? And fellow believers who don't understand things the same way we do, maybe don't have the same spiritual priorities, don't have a different kind of church, a different kind of worship. There are things that we just say, I don't know how you can do that.

7-Eleven praise songs and sandals and jute necklaces on the stage at the church. The church has a stage instead of a platform. You've got light shows.

You've got all kinds of things going on. That's just anathema to me. Look at Christianity around us.

They had the Dove Awards on TV last night, and I tried to watch some of it. And I am telling you, there's nothing that will drive me up the wall faster than looking at contemporary Christian music, listening to it. In my opinion, there's an awful lot of potential for subjectivity in it.

And I'll just leave it at that, because I'm going to try to follow the message. Exhortation here. But look, these people have an enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus.

They believe that this is a way to spread the gospel. I say, look, God may use that. I'm not God.

I don't know how he works, but all of us have to come from somewhere. And if God's got a way to work in and through that, then God bless him. You guys go saying, I'm not listening to it.

I wouldn't buy that stuff if you paid me to take it. I wouldn't play it. I can't listen to it.

It just sends me into sympathetic vibrations of such a nature that I start coming apart at the seams. But what's the point? We are brothers and sisters in Christ, and I am not going to wrangle. I'm not going to go start preaching at those people saying, don't you know your music is subjective and repetitious and self-centered, and it's all about you and not about Christ, and I love how he makes me feel, and I'm having such a good time now that Jesus is serving me.

Some of it, I could easily pick it apart. I could shoot it down. I could set explosives under it and blow it to kingdom come.

But I will not. I should not. I must not.

I am commanded not to by this passage that says, don't wrangle. You find the common ground and focus on the connection. Do not debate.

Paul says, Chloe's household is telling me, you all are letting differences rip. Don't let the differences rip things. If I meet somebody that just won the Dove Award, and I listened to their

song, and I thought it was the most heinous thing ever written, I'm going to smile.

I'm going to greet them as a fellow brother or sister in Christ, and pray that God can use them in whatever way God can use them to do whatever it is God is doing, and that they can grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior, and that we will all be united when the Lord Jesus comes back, and we will be united in admiration and adoration and appreciation of the Lord Jesus. Do not let a rip in the body occur over differences. That's what this says.

And it's extremely practical, because we are so human in our tendency to develop a superiority complex. Well, I know better than that. I mean, come on.

How could you not know? Have you not read your Bible? I mean, my quickest path to destruction is looking at a padre in the Catholic Church. Jesus said, let no man call you father. And all they do is have everybody call him father.

And I think, where's your Bible? I don't care how many different accretions the Catholic Church puts on it. Did you not hear Jesus say, let no man call you father? And the very first word out of anybody's mouth when they see you is, father. Father, forgive me, I have sinned.

That's in the confessional. Every Catholic that ever goes to the confessional, father, forgive me. He's not talking to the heavenly father.

He's talking to the priest on the other side of the little screen there. I just, it just makes you want to rip your hair out. Well, if I, and I have, met Catholic priests all the time.

And what's the proper response? Look, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you may have a lot of things wrong. But if, when the judgment seat comes, and as it were, God the Father says, hey, I'm about to open up the gates of the kingdom here. I'm about to open up the eternal future.

Why should I let you in? If your answer is because Jesus Christ died for me and I believed in him for my salvation, you're saved and you're a brother in Christ. And whatever your mistakes, whatever your history, whatever your persuasions, whatever your fanatical weirdness is, or whatever you think mine are, we're related. And I will not create a rip, a schism.

So Paul says, I plead with you, brethren, by the testimony of Jesus Christ that's been established in your midst, that you speak the same thing. You find the things that you can speak together. It doesn't mean everything you speak is going to be the same.

That you could just have one guy in the church and you wouldn't need everybody else. But when you're together, focus on the things that are the same, that you can speak together. Isn't Jesus a wonderful Savior? Isn't the grace of God tremendous? Isn't the love of God expressed through Jesus Christ the most amazing thing you've ever seen? Isn't it wonderful that we have the expectation that this world will be done away and the sinfulness of it will be judged and we can go forward into an eternal future with the Lord? Isn't that great? Speak the same thing.

Find the things you can speak that are the same, that are a part of the testimony of Jesus Christ. Anybody that's got that testimony, you're going to have some common ground somewhere. Speak that same thing so that there are no schisms among you, but that you are perfectly joined together.

Not perfectly joined in every single doctrinal understanding, but you're perfectly joined together in those same things, that testimony of Christ that you have in common. That's where you're perfectly joined. Not even a crack there.

Not even an askance glance. Well, okay, I'll tolerate you, you spiritual baby. None of that.

Or somebody doing that to us, which is equally likely. It has been declared to me that there are these contentions, debates, wranglings. You're letting arguments create rips.

Now I say this, verse 12, each of you says, I am of Paul or I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas or I am of Christ. I've risen above you that are picking one particular brand of teaching, one particular denomination. Well, I just go with Christ.

I don't really listen to any teacher. And you would think, well, if it's the testimony of Christ that was established, then why wouldn't these of Christ, why wouldn't Paul approve them? There's nothing wrong with being of Christ. And Paul builds to that.

He says, first of all, those who say, I am of Paul. He says, I'm speaking to you. I say this, it's fine if you think Paul is the one that really was able to communicate in a meaningful way to you.

It's fine if you say Apollos is the one that really helped me understand. Or, you know, we're transplants. We came from Rome or we came from some other part of the empire and we heard Peter preach.

And that's what really brought us to Christ. Or you say, I just appreciate Christ. He says, whichever of those different sources you come from, I am of, I am from Paul or Apollos or Peter.

And by the way, it's interesting, most of the time when Paul refers to Peter, he calls him Kephas. Once or twice he'll say Peter, but most of the time he calls him by his Aramaic name, Kephas. Nothing wrong with saying, I am of Christ.

Paul is actually sort of promoting this, right? What's the problem? It isn't saying, I am of Paul. It's saying, I am, I am, and you're not. Way back in the early days of Saturday Night Live that only the oldest of us remember now, Chevy Chase used to do the evening, the news update, whatever they call that thing.

And he would say, I'm Chevy Chase and you're not. Which I never really saw the comedy in that, but that was one of his little taglines. But they're saying, I am of Apollos and you're not.

I am of Christ and you're not. It's a wonderful thing to be of Christ. That's the answer.

I am of Christ. That's why we're a non-denominational church. We don't pick a side.

We don't pick a creed. We're a Bible church. We try to go by what the Bible says, right? So what's wrong with saying, I am of Christ? It's the, I am of Christ and you're not.

I am. It's eyes on self, eyes on people. And he says, you're saying, I am of Christ might be okay in and of itself, but it is the basis for a schism.

You are using that as the basis for debate and wrangling and argumentation. Well, the only way it could be a wrangling debate and argument is if it's the I am part that is at issue. There's nothing wrong with saying, you know, Paul is the guy.

I just learned more from him than anybody. All of us have pastors in the past or even in the present that we appreciate because they do a great job of pulling back the curtain and letting us see the truth of God, letting us appreciate the Lord Jesus in his person, in his work, communicating that testimony. Nothing wrong with appreciating somebody or say, you know, this is just, I just prefer to listen to this guy because he, I get the most out of it.

It's the best use of my time. It gives me the most persuasion and motivation and encouragement to just get it from this particular guy. There's plenty of shepherds and plenty of flocks and, you know, you can go from one to the other.

But here's the thing. If that appreciation turns into schism with other believers, even saying I am of Christ is wrong if you use it to rip things and wrangle and debate with other believers. Saying, well, I'm a Bible church, you know, I've risen above denominations would be wrong if that becomes a pride point.

And Paul says that's what's happening. It doesn't matter who you pick. You could pick Christ himself.

This is sort of one of those Pauline arguments like even the demons believe and tremble. You can even be of Christ and you could still be wrong. Wrong.

It is wrong to diminish or put down or tear the fabric with other believers. I don't care what they think. If they are in Christ and we are in Christ, there should be perfect connection on that basis alone.

I don't care what they believe. I don't care how many feet they wash, how many tongues they talk, how many healings they think they've had, how many doves fly over. If they're a fellow believer, Paul says you need to have a perfect link.

Find what's in common and focus on that. Do not rip the fabric of the body of Christ. That's why the very next phrase here is, is Christ divided? And you can take this, the Greek here, it's really kind of an interpretation because the Greek here says Christ is divided exclamation point.

Are you cool with that? It can be taken in some translations. You look at various translations,

you get one of these New Testament and 26 versions or whatever. A lot of them say Christ is divided and it's a declaration.

But based on the pattern here of questions, most translations pitch it as a question. But Paul just puts the concept out there. Basically, Christ divided? You can say Christ divided.

What do you think about that? Would you take the Lord and, I mean, even the Romans that crucified Him didn't divide Him. They didn't chop anything off, they didn't break any bones, they didn't behead Him. Even in His crucifixion, He was not divided.

You're going to divide Christ? Are you serious? What are you thinking? Maybe you're in ear and maybe somebody's a little toe and the connection is very long and tenuous, but you're connected. Don't chop anything out. Don't rip anything off of Jesus Christ.

You're linked in Him. That's the idea. Was Paul crucified for you? Are you getting your eyes on who you appreciate as a communicator and forgetting the basis for unity, which is Christ was crucified for all of us.

That's the person in work. That's the testimony. The testimony of Christ is that unshakable foundation that unites us all.

Don't lose sight of it. Who was crucified for you? It wasn't me, Paul says. So don't use your appreciation for Paul as a basis for separation.

Use your appreciation for Christ who was crucified for all of us as a basis for unity. It's a beautifully constructed presentation, beautifully constructed appeal. He pleads.

Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Is it who baptized you? That's what you're going to use to say, well, your baptism wasn't as great as my baptism. I was baptized in the Jordan. That's the popular thing now.

I went to the Holy Land. I was baptized in the Jordan. Well, I was only baptized in a creek.

Well, I was baptized in a swimming pool. Well, I was effused when I was a baby, or I was sprinkled, or I was this, that, and the other, as though that is a basis for a rift. Well, your baptism wasn't even right.

The nature of whatever ritual baptism you may or may not have undergone as a believer is no basis for tearing, tearing unity. He says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. He says, I thank God that I didn't baptize any of you.

Now, this is not in and of itself an indictment of water baptism. Water baptism was a valid ritual in this time, just like spiritual gifts that he's going to talk about at length were valid and operative in this time. Water baptism was valid and operative in this time.

Paul is not here saying, I thank God that if I had to do it over again, I wouldn't baptize any of

you. Baptism is off the table. That's not really what he's saying.

What he's saying is, I'm glad that I provided so few occasions that the people that I baptized are not ripping the body over the fact that I'm the one that baptized them. I baptized Crispus and Gaius in the house of Stephanas. He's going to come back to Stephanas at the end of the letter in chapter 16 or something.

He'll talk about Stephanas again. But he says, I'm thankful that the people I baptized are quality folks who aren't using that to beat other people over the head and say, well, you better listen to me because I've got the apostolic succession here. Anybody that uses apostolic succession to try to tell people the truth falls afoul of Paul's argument right here.

It isn't who the pope is. It isn't, well, you know, I got baptized in a bigger church than you, or I got taught in a bigger church. I got evangelized.

I talked to Billy Graham and Billy Graham personally evangelized me. So I'm special. Nothing should rip the body.

It's just that simple. Lest any should say that I baptized in my own name. I also baptized the house of Stephanas.

Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. I'm not even thinking about that. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words.

Now, didn't he just say that it was by means of utterance and wisdom that the testimony was established? Didn't he say that back in verse five? Christ sent me to preach the gospel, not by means of the wisdom of words. Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Now, he says, I used wisdom and I used words to build that testimony of Jesus Christ.

Nothing wrong with words, nothing wrong with wisdom, but that's not the focus. It is the means to an end. It is the end that counts.

Christ didn't send me just to speak words and spout wisdom. He sent me to establish the testimony. And if you get focused on the means, this is like getting all wrapped up in, did I go to church? Did I read my Bible? Did I hear a Bible class? Instead of the content of what comes across when you go to church.

Did I spend time in fellowship with believers, but all we talked about was the ballgame? Or did I spend time in fellowship with believers and we were in Christ? We were speaking the truth in love. It isn't that you do a thing. It isn't the form.

It is the content. And you can't just have words and you can't just have wisdom. The words and the wisdom are the means to an end.

And it is making Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, real, present, a common ground where we unite. You see the difference? Because he says it was by means of utterance and wisdom that

you got the testimony. And here he says, Jesus didn't send me to use words and wisdom.

Well, how can that be? Is he contradicting himself? No, he's saying you've got to look past the form. And by extension, you've got to look past the messenger. You're starting to look at the messenger and make an issue out of, well, if it's utterance and wisdom that established it, Apollos has got that all over Paul.

And Apollos and Paul have got it all over Peter. Peter's just a blue collar guy. You want to talk about somebody that's rough hewn.

And so the better the words and the wisdom, the better Christian I am. Paul says you're looking at the wrong thing. You're looking at the glass instead of what you're drinking out of it.

You're looking at the messenger instead of the message. And even saying I am of Christ, if you're dividing over that, you're missing it. Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Now, has he referred to the cross of Christ previously? Was Paul crucified for you? It's the cross of Christ. It is Christ, his person and his work. He is the lamb of God.

The first thing John the Baptist said, behold, the lamb of God. He takes away the sin of the world. All of us that believe in him for salvation have had our sins removed.

He is our savior. It is his cross. The person on the cross, the work on the cross, the redemption.

You remember that testimony? Go back and look at those verses again. That testimony of Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1.10. If you didn't get the first time, look it up. 2 Thessalonians 1.10. Our testimony was believed.

1 Timothy 2, verse 6. Christ gave himself a ransom for all. He gave himself, his person, a ransom, his work for all. It is the cross of Christ you make of no effect.

Everyone being included in his body, everyone being blessed with the potential of his spirit and the power of his word, you tear that when you start making an issue out of non-essentials. Find the essentials. Find what unites.

Let there be a perfect unity even with people that believe wildly different things. If they're in the body, you find a way to be united. Do not rip the body.

I hear that there are contentions, wranglings, debates, disputes. Don't be doing that. Let God the Holy Spirit convict.

Let God the Holy Spirit teach. Those who are hungry are going to be dissatisfied when they're getting pabulum. They will be dissatisfied when the doctrine they are getting and being taught doesn't work, doesn't fit, doesn't meet the need.

Those who are hungry will keep searching until they find the food. Speak the truth. Leave an

open door.

If you know the truth and they don't, you don't have to try to browbeat them into believing what you believe. Be perfectly united so that when they are hungry and they do begin to ask questions, they say, well, you know, I think filling your name here might be able to help me with this. I just don't feel right about what I'm being taught in my church or in my area of Christianity.

And you know, there's a wonderfully gracious, peaceful person in my periphery who's a believer. Maybe I'll go ask them and see how they understand this. If you've ripped the fabric, they're never going to do that.

If you've tried to argue them and browbeat them and debate them into a better understanding, you've wrecked it. Find that common ground, focus on that, and they will walk across that common ground if they have any hunger or thirst at all. And you're going to be there to speak the truth in love.

That's the way the body grows. That's the way the body benefits each other. All things are yours.

You've been enriched with every spiritual gift. Great. Be ready to share that if someone asks you a reason for your hope.

Be ready to speak the truth in love when they come across that unbroken hope. Be ready to speak the truth in love when they come across that unbroken bridge that you've left intact so that they're not ashamed, they don't have to humble themselves, there's not an issue of face or pride. You're the person God can use, potentially, to help a fellow believer grow and come to a closer appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Let there be no schism. As far as it is up to you, live peaceably with all men. Remember that? To the extent that it's up to you.

It's not always up to you. Somebody may want to hit you over the head with their persuasion. Well, so be it.

But as far as it is up to us, live peaceably with all men. Leave an open door they can walk through without humiliation, without having to give something up. That's Paul's appeal.

And that's the first 17 verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 1. We'll continue at verse 18. The message of the cross. The message of the cross is the issue.

The message of the cross is what unites us. Person and work of Christ. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the powerful testimony that it imparts to us, the encouragement and the exhortation that we find here to be the people that

you would have us be. And function as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ in his absence in our culture, in our periphery, in our families, and in our workplace.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will help us see the pertinence and the application of this day by day as we try to live as you would have us live and reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus now and when he returns. And we appreciate and admire him. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.