

1Corinthians 17-11-26a

This is Sunday, the 26th of November 2017. We continue our study in the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 1. We began a study last time in the 12th through the 17th verses, dealing with the issue of baptism. And so we've been taking a closer look at what Paul means by this, why he brings it up in this context, and what the place is of baptism as a concept and as a practice in the Christian church, particularly the church of today.

Let's take a moment as we prepare to continue our study to go to the Lord in prayer and ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our time of concentration. Father, we are thankful in this week of Thanksgiving for the many blessings you have granted to us in our individual lives, in our larger context as a nation, as a community, as a fellowship, as families. We thank you for your grace and your patience with us in our shortcomings and our failures.

We thank you for your watch care and your guidance in protecting us and keeping us safe and challenging us and giving us opportunities to exercise our faith. We thank you for the gifts that you have granted to each one of us and the blessings that we receive through contact and time spent together. And we pray that this time, this morning, it will be a blessing not only through the hearing of your word and the ministry of your spirit, but through that fellowship that unites us as we together seek to glorify the Lord Jesus in our lives and be pleasing in your sight.

We pray that you'll bless us with understanding and insight as we look at this set of concepts and portions of your word together and that each one will be motivated and encouraged in the days ahead as a result. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's review our passage. We know the recipients of this letter in Corinth. We know that Paul had established the church a couple of years earlier, had spent, actually several years earlier, and had spent a couple of years in Corinth building up that group and then had left and had heard reports that subsequent to his leaving with the coming and going of Apollos, that the group had begun to fragment into different understandings and largely victimized by subjectivity, allowing themselves to divide and to cast aspersions on one another for reasons that Paul addresses in this letter.

And he says, I plead with you, in verse 10, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's a not insignificant pleading. I plead with you in, by, and with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You think about our topic of baptism and what Matthew 28.19 says. As you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Paul here pleads by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you speak the same things, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

This doesn't mean that your mind and your judgment have to be, in all places and cases, the

same. It means that you join together where your mind and your judgment is the same. And you do not allow the differences to divide you.

So this is like Tinker Toys. This is like an erector set. This is like Lego.

You can take the pieces and stick them together. They're not joined at all parts. They are necessarily distinct and separate.

But where they join, the bond is secure. And you don't use the opposite ends to pry that union apart. We're never going to be of like mind.

I doubt that there's any two pastors in the world today that agree on every single interpretation of Scripture, every single translation, every single point of doctrine. Or politically or in familial matters or anything else. There's always going to be distinctions.

That's what makes us individuals. And the body is composed of many parts, and the whole body is not an eye or an ear or a hand, as is pointed out in other places. But there should be no divisions.

Be perfectly joined together where your mind is the same and where your judgment is the same. Concentrate on that to the extent that things are true and of good report. It has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

Paul says you can certainly discuss, you can certainly share your understanding that may differ from someone else's, but at the point that it becomes a contention. Now, is there a time to contend? Do we contend for the faith? We do, but we contend for the faith with those who are not of the faith. We are not united to them.

We don't have that joining in those things that are essential. If somebody says Jesus is not the Son of God, He's not the Savior of the world, it's ridiculous to think that God would kill somebody in order to make Himself happy. He's a bloody God.

All of these nonsensical things. Yes, there is a time to argue. There is a time to contend.

There is a time to defend. There is a time to be apologetic in the original sense of the word. An apologia, an apology, was originally an argument in debate form in favor of a particular proposition.

And we can be unapologetic about apologizing for the faith in that sense. But that's different than a local church. And this context, remember, we can even debate the wisdom of policies and understandings from a biblical point of view of groups within the large body of Christ.

I can say I don't think that holy laughter is a good thing as practiced by some Charismatics. I can

say from Scripture that certain practices, infant baptism or foot washing or whatever, are not biblical. But there is a difference in that and it being a contention.

These are divisions and contentions within a local group. And if you find yourself out of harmony with a group to the point that it becomes impossible to co-locate and to have conversations without there being divisions, that's a good time to leave, to find a fellowship where that does not occur. But you don't stay and split the group.

You don't be the cause of divisions and contentions. When you say within the group, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, instead of saying, you know, this is a church that was founded by the Apostle Paul and we've received a wonderful teaching ministry from Apollos, isn't that great? They're saying, well, I'm old school. I'm going back to the founding truths that Paul taught us over that two years he was here.

Well, I like the stuff that Apollos had to say. I'm going with that and it creates a division in the local assembly. So he says, Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

I plead with you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I don't want anyone saying that I've done anything in my own name. What we do is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lest anyone should say I had baptized in my own name. I baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

Not with the wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect. Now, does this mean that Paul is not going to impart wisdom? He already said, We confirmed your faith. I thank God for the grace in verse 4, given you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything, in utterance and knowledge, as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you.

So why is he now saying, Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect. Not with wisdom of words. He's going to use the wisdom of words, but that's not the basis for the substance of the message.

That isn't what makes the message valid, because it is so wonderfully presented. There are many cases that can be made in an erudite fashion. You think about William F. Buckley in an earlier day, that was a wonderfully erudite gentleman.

Carl Sagan, wonderfully erudite and well-spoken gentleman. You've got DeGrasse Tyson, and you've got Sam Harris, and you have Richard Dawkins, and you have Bart Ehrman, and you have people representing many, many different points of view that are extremely well-spoken. And they can make their case with the wisdom of words.

A case made with the wisdom of words doesn't make the case right. What makes the case right? In other words, if people are starting to contend and to divide over different points of view, and you're trying to figure out who's right. Is the Apollos crowd right? The Paul crowd right? The Christ crowd right? Do you listen to who's made the more carefully constructed arguments? Who's got the more persuasive zinger at the end of their little debate stint? It's not the wisdom of words that validates the position, and that substantiates the truth.

It is the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ. And he goes on to say, the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

It can easily be savaged with the wisdom of words. And there are people who do so. Go to the skeptic websites.

I'm not encouraging you to do so. But if you do, you will see people using all kinds of very self-satisfied, scornful wisdom of words arguments to say that faith in God in general, and faith in Christ in particular, is just ridiculous. And ridiculous in the original sense of the word.

To be ridiculed. And they do. And they will very extensively and savagely attack it.

The central message is the cross. If you're looking for truth, if you're looking for unity, you unite at the foot of the cross. And we'll talk more about what the cross as an emblem represents shortly.

But we have stopped here to take a closer look. I thank God that I baptize none of you except Crispus and Gaius. And he should say I baptize in my own name.

So we started looking at baptism. And you remember in Ephesians, I think it's 4 or 5, where it says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. And yet there is the widespread practice of water baptism in the modern day.

If that is the one baptism, then what do we do with the baptism of the Spirit? So we're trying to take a closer look at this. And as we do, we are trying to figure out whether we should, in fact, be using one as a symbol of the other. Are they somehow integrated? Is there a validity or a legitimacy to using it as a teaching tool? What exactly should we do with water baptism? So what I'd like to do is quickly summarize what we covered last week and then move forward in that concept.

We know for a fact that there was water baptism in the New Testament. John the Baptist practiced it. We know that Jesus' disciples practiced it.

It clarifies that Jesus himself did not, but his disciples did. We know that this was in the Old Testament age, that this is a part of the proclamation of the coming of the Lord Jesus. After the cross, we know that there was water baptism.

After Pentecost, we know that there was water baptism. Will any forbid water that these should

be baptized, these on whom the Spirit has come, and so on. So the question is, has this been established in Scripture as an ordinance that should continue to be practiced down beyond the first generation of the church or not? So I was researching this, and I ran across a really interesting short book that was published in 1872 in England by a gentleman who is a minister in the Church of England.

And his book is titled, *Is Water Baptism an Institution of Christ?* And it's by a man named W. Blackley, late vicar of Stanton. And I was frankly a little bit surprised. I didn't know how far out in the weeds by myself I might be.

But in his introduction, he talks about that it has long been a subject of thought for him. And he arrived at the conviction that the Lord Jesus never instituted any such rite as water baptism for observance in his church, either in the way of dipping or sprinkling. And that the apostles, after the commission of Matthew 28, 19, and 20 was given them, never practiced any such rite, which is a little bit of an eyebrow raiser because we tend to believe that they did.

And you know how it is with assumptions. You make assumptions, and then you have to go back and revisit them sometimes when someone challenges them. And I began to go back and think, well, can I actually think of a scriptural instance where the Bible says that one of Christ's apostles actually baptized with water? And I was chagrined to realize that while I have made that assumption for many years, there's not.

So I was intrigued enough to continue reading his book. And I'd like to share some of his thoughts because many of them match what we have already covered last week. And then he goes a bit forward.

I don't think there's any one guy that you can just take to the bank and everything he says is golden. Mr. Blackley is not a dispensationalist, and so he's going to get into some arguments that have to do with the 70 weeks and the timing of the ministry of Christ and one thing or another that I wouldn't find persuasive. But I am most interested in anybody, any interpretation, commentary, good or bad, that brings my mind to a fresh perspective on looking at the scripture.

And I will tell you, this is a thought that never crossed my mind in all of my long years on the earth. It never dawned on me that scripture never portrays any of Christ's original apostles, including, by the way, the apostle Paul, baptizing with water. And you say, well, but didn't we just read one? Well, hold that thought.

Because while it talks about baptism, there is nowhere any water mentioned. It just says baptizing. If there's one baptism, then maybe this is talking about that one baptism and not baptism with water.

And why does Paul bring baptism up in this context? And remember, we've been talking about the name. The name. I plead with you in the name of the Lord Jesus.

I didn't baptize in my own name. What is apostolic baptism as it is initiated in Matthew 28, 19, and 20? So I was intrigued enough to share this with you, Mr. Blackley's thoughts, and I want to give him full credit for them because they certainly didn't dawn on me. And he goes on to say here, and this is from the introduction, the cause for such difference of opinion about what baptism means.

And he talks about the wide differences in understanding. The opinions of persons upon it have been as different from each other as light is from darkness. Some have stated that in and by the administration of the rite of water baptism, grace is imparted to the subject.

And this, as you know, is the belief of some denominations that you're not fully saved until you're baptized. The Catholic Church believes that there is some grace imparted at the font of baby baptism and dedication and so on. Others believe that no grace is imparted.

Others that its subjects should only be adult believers and that there's no baptism where there is no immersion. Some that infant sprinkling is complete baptism. Others that infant sprinkling must be followed by confirmation.

Others that confirmation is not necessary. And as soon as you start getting into water baptism, well, when is it meaningful? How old should somebody be? Should they profess some certain level of understanding or belief before they are baptized? Who can do a baptism? Where should it be done? Should it be private? Can it be public? Should it be by effusion? Should it be by sprinkling? Should it be by dunking? And it's all over the map. That there is water involved is one of the few common denominators of the whole thing.

But who, where, when, why, how, how many times? What does it do, if anything? Is it just a proclamation? Scripture is silent on all of those issues. So, the cause for such difference of opinion, Mr. Blackley conceives to have arisen from a misapprehension of the meaning of the commission given by Christ to the apostles in Matthew 28, 19 and 20. He also quotes Mark 16, 15, which of course I don't believe there's any Scripture after Mark 16, 8 or 9. The short ending of Mark is not inspired, and so you can dismiss that.

But you do have the quote-unquote great commission. Persons have reasoned, as the author thinks, on a false assumption, and the premises being wrong on which they have reasoned, their conclusions have been wrong also, causing that indefiniteness and contrariness of opinion which has so long existed. They've taken that to be of general, which was only intended to be of limited application.

In other words, they've taken Matthew 28, 19, baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, and believed that this is for everybody for all time when it was of a limited and specific application, which is something I have already suggested to you, that this was the great commission, quote-unquote, oddly, was not given by the Lord Jesus when He appeared to

upwards of 500 in one place. It was specifically given to the 11, and the 11 only. And they have taken it to be of general application when it was only intended to be of limited application.

Consequently, they have clothed Christianity with a garment it was never intended to wear, which I think is a nice turn of phrase. I love reading these guys that were educated 150 years ago because they talk so much better than we do. The error on the subject commenced very early, and Tertullian writes a work on baptism in opposition to those who in the 2nd century opposed water baptism as an institution of Christ.

We have a surviving work by Tertullian arguing in favor of water baptism because there was a group that said, the Lord Jesus never intended us to keep on doing this. This is in the 2nd century. That's the 100's Anno Domini one something, which tells you that very early on there was a division of opinion.

This is not a new idea that we shouldn't, and those who say there's always been water baptism going back to who laid the chunk is not correct. Very early on there was a debate about this because of those who said we're not supposed to keep on doing this. So he says, It will be seen in the following pages, the object of the author is to discuss the subject by the light of the written word of God, taking as a sound principle the statement that whatsoever is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, i.e. the written word of God, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.

That by the way is one of the articles of faith of the Church of England that distinguishes it from the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome says whatever the Pope says is on equal authority with Scripture. The Church of England says if you can't find it written in the word of God it shouldn't be an article of faith or practice for anybody.

If it's not in the Bible, you're on your own. So, having introduced this, he goes to the passage we looked at last time. People generally take it for granted that where the word baptism occurs, water is always involved, but this is a mistake.

Witness the following instances where baptism without water is spoken of and this before the day of Pentecost. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He shall baptize you with fire.

We know for a fact water is not involved or required for those. Jesus talking to James and John. We've revisited this in Revelation where my theory is that maybe the two witnesses are James and John because Jesus says when they ask can we be seated either they or their mother at your right and left hand in the kingdom and he says I have a baptism to be baptized with and how I am straitened until it be accomplished.

Well, Jesus says this long after John baptized him in the Jordan. He says I have an upcoming baptism and I am straitened until it is accomplished. Well, that was not a water baptism.

Jesus wasn't baptized with water again. And when they ask about the left and right chairs, can you be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with? Remember, Lord we are able. And then he says with the baptism that I am baptized with all shall ye be baptized.

Shall ye be baptized. No water involved in that. So these passages show a baptism might and did take place without the use of water.

So, he goes on then to talk about the timing of the ministry of Christ and I'm going to skip about 20 pages but there's a part of this I want to read. I will occasionally give you sources that I appeal to when I'm studying because I think they said it better than I can reconstitute it or regurgitate it. And because he is so well spoken I just want to read you something that starts down here on about page 28.

And this is after his arguments interesting but not persuasive on the 70 weeks of Daniel talking about the ministry of Christ. And his argument is that basically he believes the 70th week was the first half of it was the ministry of the Lord Jesus and the last half of it was the ministry of the 11 apostles to the Jews. And that the covenant with the many being broken in the middle of the week is the crucifixion of Christ.

And it's an interesting point of view. If you're curious I'd recommend taking a look at it. It's interesting.

I don't agree but it's interesting. When they read of the great persecution arising against the church at Jerusalem when all the disciples were dispersed abroad find it stated that those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. That's Acts 8, 1-4.

The believers are blown out of Jerusalem. And this is going everywhere preaching the word. People assume that this included the Gentiles but it doesn't say that.

When they went everywhere preaching the word that was still Israel only. And we know this from Acts 11-19. As Blackley says here, No Gentile was as yet cheered by the accents of mercy being proclaimed to him.

The apostles and brethren did not as yet dream of casting the children's bread to dogs. It was not meet in their view to do so. And this is Matthew 15-26.

Jesus talking to the woman. They did not because as I conceive they had no commission to do it. And if that were the case then the baptism referred to in the commission of 28-19 of Matthew has been most woefully mistaken and the mistaking of it has done infinite mischief to the cause of Christ and is the cause of there being even now so much as they would say in Britain controversy upon it as there is and of it being so little understood.

That there is one baptism in the Christian system is clearly admitted by St. Paul. We saw that last

time in Ephesians 4. This baptism is not a water baptism but a baptism of divine grace. And this is the having the love of God or the Holy Spirit shed abroad or poured out in the heart.

Romans 5-5, Titus 3-6. I had to go down to a footnote for that. Divine grace.

Working a change in the heart as referred to in Colossians 2-12. Having been buried with him in the baptism in which also ye were raised with him by faith of the operation of God. Now think about that.

You can turn to Colossians 2-12. A few pages over from Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. In him, verse 11, you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands.

And we do not believe that circumcision is an ordinance for the church. You can argue pro and con about practicing it for any one of a number of reasons. But in him, Paul says to the Colossians 2-11, you were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.

So we see that this is an immaterial circumcision. Formerly a physical rite, now a spiritual reality. Verse 12, buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.

The parallel suggesting that this is also an immaterial baptism formerly practiced as a rite illustrating a coming consummate truth. And buried with him in baptism. Now we are not united with Christ by water baptism.

We are not put into union with Christ, entered into his body and united with one another by water baptism. Although that is the belief of some. This is the one baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates us. Titus 3.5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, which would include a righteous baptism, but according to his mercy he saved us the washing of water and renewal of the Holy Ghost. The washing of water, this is a picture.

The washing of water and renewal of the Holy Ghost. It doesn't mean that you were saved by physical washing of water. What was formerly pictured by the washing of water is now accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

You see how to understand Titus 3.5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, not by ablutions, not anything you can do. It is God's mercy that saves us. The washing of water and renewal are both from the Holy Spirit.

The washing of water and renewal is no longer the ritual of the labor or of any form of prior baptism, but it is the Holy Spirit. Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Washing of the Holy Spirit.

It accomplishes what water used to do. Colossians 2.12 Buried with him in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God. You're buried with him in baptism.

You're raised with him through faith. Faith is the means by which we enter into Christ. The means is the baptism of the Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead.

You being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of ordinances, requirements that was against us, contrary to us, taking it out of the way, having nailed it to his cross. You see that all of this is figurative language? There's only one thing nailed to the cross. The Lord Jesus.

You could argue perhaps the sign above his head, but when he talks about the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, having been nailed to the cross, this was his figurative language for the work of Christ on the cross. Remember Paul in Corinthians 1, not persuasive words, lest the cross of Christ be made of no effect. The two pieces of wood conjoined are not what Paul is talking about.

The cross of Christ, what does the cross symbolize? What does the nailing of the Lord Jesus to the cross represent? Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. So we want to be sensitive here and not end up strapping a phylactery to our hand and to our head and physically nailing the commandments of God to our doorpost when God is clearly speaking to us in figurative terms about transcendent truths and transcendent realities. So this baptism is a baptism of divine grace.

Having been buried with him in the baptism in which also you were raised with him by the faith of the operation of God. Having mentioned that there is one baptism in the Christian system, I may refer to Hebrews 6,2, Blackley says, where two baptisms are mentioned. Now this is an interesting thought.

We've done Hebrews and we translated chapter 6. Remember he says, not laying again the foundation of change of mind away from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms. And he translates it here, of the doctrine of baptisms, both of a laying on of hands and of a resurrection from the dead and from eternal condemnation. So where we typically translate that that there is a doctrine of baptisms and there is a doctrine of a laying on of hands and there is a doctrine of a resurrection from the dead and deliverance from eternal condemnation.

You can also construe the Greek, the doctrine of baptisms, and it is baptisms plural there. We say if there is one baptism, why didn't he say doctrine of baptism? Well, John's baptism was one thing, the water baptism practiced by the disciples was another, and in the first days of the church, Philip baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, and then there is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So if you're going to understand the difference between dead works and faith toward God, of former

baptisms and the current baptism, that would be in view.

What's interesting though about this is the mention of the laying on of hands. We've seen the laying on of hands in Timothy referring to the commissioning of others to preach and to teach, but there is an often overlooked laying on of hands that may also be in view. In the same way that baptisms refers to various kinds of baptism, some of which had perished and others that continue, there was a laying on of hands that was formerly practiced and no longer continues, as well as this idea of commissioning those to preach and teach.

So the baptism spoken of in Ephesians 4, verse 5 is part of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, which the author of Hebrews argues are to be laid aside, ceasing with the apostles, others continuing. So the upshot of his contention here is that the baptism that the Lord Jesus gave to the eleven in Matthew 28, verse 19 was a baptism of the laying on of hands. In other words, when people came to faith in Christ and one of those apostles laid their hands on them, this is starting at Pentecost and going forward.

Remember, Jesus says, stay in Jerusalem, don't do anything until the promise of the Father comes upon you. You shall be witnesses unto me. Wait for the promise of the Father.

What is the promise of the Father that they are waiting on? It is the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, right? From that point forward, when the apostles laid hands on someone, they got the baptism of the Spirit in an overt fashion. They would speak in tongues, they would be healed, an overt manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit would happen when an apostle laid on hands. So Blackley says here, Our Lord, instead of enjoining any baptism on then future believers, He was speaking of persons who had believed on Him.

Whatever the baptism was, it had taken place. And he mentions again Mark 16, 15. But, I do not deny that water baptism was sometimes used after the day of Pentecost, and that in token, that persons dedicated themselves to Christ as the Savior and Mediator between God and man.

The water baptism, which had been commenced by John to manifest Christ to Israel, went on, more or less, amongst the Jews till the formal opening of the kingdom of God to the Gentiles. We have no proof, however, from Scripture that it went on any longer. That it became universal after the formal opening of the gospel to the Gentiles cannot be proved.

St. Paul, writing to the churches of Galatia, chapter 3, verse 27, As many of you as were baptized into Christ put on Christ, which words imply that only a portion of those to whom he wrote had been baptized into Christ. As many of you all as were baptized into Christ, that number of you, like Acts 4, 34, all had not put on Christ because all had not been baptized into Christ, only some of you, some of them, had been. We know of no instance in Scripture which would imply that the water baptism was vital, that it was life-giving, that it imparted grace, or that it conveyed the least spiritual power or was commanded.

The instances of it taking place between the day of Pentecost and the opening of the door to the Gentiles are only those mentioned in connection with Philip. In Acts 8, every other instance where persons are afterwards said to have been baptized are in connection with Paul. Which instances we believe to have involved apostolic baptism, which was without water.

And so he's going to argue that our instance here in Corinthians is Paul establishing the Galatian church. Paul as an apostle had the power to confer the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit with his touch. And you remember that this is what happens in Acts.

We've received only the baptism of John. Paul lays hands on them and they receive the Holy Spirit, as we'll see. So this is a thought that you might want to take a moment to digest.

Not to say that there is anything intrinsically wrong with water baptism done understanding that it does not confer grace, that it does not add to salvation. If you want to see it as a public proclamation, as a ritual means of identifying with Christ, representing those truths that pertain at the point of salvation, to let people in the periphery know that you are formally dying to your old way of life and dedicating yourself to new life in Christ, it's not wrong. It may be good.

But to understand what the Scripture has to say about making any sort of issue, what is 1 Corinthians 1 about? Don't make an issue out of things that will create a contention or a division. I would say that probably most of the believers I have known in my life were Baptists. I grew up as a Baptist.

Loved the Baptist. Got baptized. Also partly grew up in the Methodist church.

Knew a lot of Methodists. Got sprinkled in the Methodist church. God bless the Methodists.

God bless the Baptists. I would never argue with them that they shouldn't sprinkle, get sprinkled, sprinkle each other. I would never argue with a Baptist that it was a waste of time building a baptistry and baptizing new converts.

I think it can be a very meaningful experience. I think it can be a wonderful time of fellowship. Do not contend.

Do not be the cause of a division over things. Why does Paul bring up baptism in that particular context? I think for the very reasons that Blackley is talking about. Baptism has become a cause for division and for separate denominations throughout church history.

Going all the way back to the 2nd century when Tertullian had to write a diatribe against a bunch of people who were arguing about the use of water baptism. Whatever you want to believe. You may decide that what I present about this subject is not persuasive and that it really needs to be a part of your life or the life of those close to you.

God bless you. I have no argument with you at all. All I want to do is point out what Scripture

does say, what it does not say.

Let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. Some want to abstain from meat that laid before idols in Paul's day and they felt that this was a testimony. I am completely separate from any form of idolatry.

My family used to practice idolatry. Now we abstain. We used to drink copious amounts of liquor.

Now my household are teetotalers. Fine, but don't divide over someone who has a bottle of wine in their house. Don't divide over someone who is careful not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess but has some in their house.

Don't divide over someone, don't call someone a legalist who abstains for their own reasons. Moderate partaking of alcohol should not be an issue that causes a contention or a division between believers. Not even to look askance.

Not even to say, well, I think they're playing with fire. It's not your place. Set it aside.

Leave it alone. We've got our hands full concentrating on our own issues, don't we? Making sure that we live before the Lord as we should. It's a non-essential.

Baptism and the understanding of it and the form of it and the means of it and even the efficacy of it, how much does it actually accomplish and how important is it, is a decision we make for ourselves. When you have a boy baby, should you get him circumcised? It's entirely up to you. The Bible is silent on that in the church age.

We're not Israelites and we're not entering into the covenant with Abraham that God had for which circumcision was assigned for the males. We're not in that group. You might want to do it for medical reasons.

You might want to do it for historic identification reasons. Maybe any one of a number of reasons you want to do it. It's your business.

And anybody that starts saying you're being cruel, you're imposing decisions on your kids. Look, if God didn't want you imposing decisions on your kids, He wouldn't have given to you in the first place. They're yours.

You raise them as you see fit, within the bounds of the law. But what is the subject here? We don't want to lose sight as we look at this issue of baptism of what is the subject. We are enjoined to not divide the body over issues.

Find that which unites us. It is the cross of Christ that unites us. It is the blood of Christ with which we were purchased.

Far more precious than silver and gold. Certainly far more precious than any debate. When we

are united with people, then we find that which joins us with them and we do not let anything pry that union apart.

Not even opinions or speculations or beliefs about various aspects of Christian faith and practice. You say, well, but they're wrong. Let them be wrong.

We're wrong too. There's not a person among us that doesn't have a wrong belief somewhere. I have misconstrued Scripture somewhere.

Perhaps multiple places. I do the very best I can before God. It is my job as a teacher to try to get it right.

And I do the very best I can. But I occasionally reverse my field. For a while I thought this, that, and the other about the flood or whatever.

Well, we learn. We grow. We come to a better understanding.

All of us do. It should never be a place for contention. That's the point.

The reason Paul brings up baptism, he's not teaching on baptism here. He's saying, you're getting into debates about who did what to whom, and who's the better teacher, preacher, what you learned, what you think is important, and you're missing the cross. The message of the cross should not be compromised.

The unity we have, having all of us would agree, we have been baptized into Christ, into His death, and we have been raised with Him to new life. There's no debate about that among anybody that's an actual believer in the Lord Jesus. Well, think on these things.

And the peace of God that passes understanding, notice, the peace of God that transcends is your understanding right? That's what will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Don't divide. Don't split.

Don't strain or fracture the unity of believers over understandings. Just in your mind, when you see somebody that understands it, believes it, practices it differently, just wish them well. Go with God.

I pray that if I think that understanding is limiting your progress, that God will bring you to a place, maybe I can speak the truth in love because I'm relaxed, I'm not full of condemnation and full of indignation and full of that which separates. Maybe I can be a person sometimes that speaks the truth in love and help you to what I believe is a better understanding. Maybe you can be the person who will speak the truth in love that will help me to a better understanding.

Maybe I've got it fouled up. I've got to go before God and ask that the light will shine in my heart that I can grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior. Our Lord and Savior.

The cross of Christ. That's what I want to understand. Paul says, I don't think I've apprehended.

I pray that I may come to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. That's our goal. Not straighten out every wrinkle in the tablecloth.

Let's eat the food. Let's grow. Let's be nourished.

Let's be strengthened. Let's be united. That's Paul's contention.

So we're going to take a few more details on baptism here as we go forward to hopefully clarify our understanding of what Scripture does and does not say. But don't miss the message. The message is we don't want to let the cross of Christ be made of no effect.

If the cross of Christ has an effect on us, what should that effect be? One Lord. One faith. One baptism.

One God and Father of us all. And there should not be a contention. There shouldn't be a division over any of these things with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let's pause here and take our break.