

then the odds are, you're already familiar with this problem. *So formed me that there are quarrels among you. What* turn in your Bibles with me to 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. We're *this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul;' another, 'I follow* going to focus on verses 10-17. And if your Bible has a heading *another, 'I follow Cephas;' still another, 'I follow Chi* above these verses like mine does, you can see that our text today *"Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you* addresses the problem of divisions in the church. Or to put it *baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I c* more positive terms, our text emphasizes the need for unity in *bap* church. And it's not insignificant that out of all the problems *that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also bap* Paul addresses in this letter, division in the church is where he *household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remembe* starts. It reminds us that unity is of first-rate importance. *baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to b*

And I think we all agree on that. We agree that unity *is* *to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom* really important. But sometimes the reason we agree about the *cross of Christ be emptied of its power."* need for unity is because we've seen so many problems caused *Now, obviously, Paul is saying unity is a good* by disunity. And there's got to be some irony tucked away in the *division is a bad thing. That jumps out at us as soon a* somewhere. It's as if the one thing we all agree about is that *the* these verses. But that's just the tip of the iceberg, and disagree too much. But unfortunately, agreeing that we disagree *really* answer the question of *how* we can be united. *S* too much doesn't necessarily keep us from disagreeing in the *to dig into this text and look for both the causes of div* future. Would you agree with me on that? And you know, even *the* foundation for unity. So let's start in verse 10. *Pa* if you disagree with me, you're actually just proving my point. *"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Je*

Corinthian Church, “One of you says, ‘I follow Paul;’ another <sup>He</sup> knew more about the Old Testament than anybody *follow Apollos;’ another, ‘I follow Cephas;’ still another, ‘I* met. This church needs to get back to what it was doing *follow Christ.’”* They were dividing into groups and arguing Paul was here.”

about which leader was their favorite, and one group was *saying*, Second on the list is Apollos. Apollos became “I follow Paul,” another group was *saying*, “I follow Apollos,” at Corinth after Paul left. And Acts 18 tells us that Apollos was another group was *saying*, “I follow Peter,” and another group very eloquent speaker and a great debater. So the Apollos group was *saying*, “I follow Christ.” They were *saying* things that was probably the group that’s really concerned with a polarized the church and divided it into factions behind each and really impressed by powerful preachers with a big leader. So Paul tells them in verse 10, “I want you to *say* the personality. You can just imagine them saying, “I’ve done the same thing. Use your words to bring unity and not division.” anybody preach like Apollos. I mean, he alliterates everywhere. That’s a great starting place for us: Your words have the power point, and he tells the best stories I’ve ever heard. His words bring unity or division. How do you use your words? Are you are way more entertaining than Paul’s ever were.” uniter when you speak, or are you a divider? I pray that all of us Third on the list is Peter, or your Bible might say you will always use our words to create unity. Cephas was his Hebrew name, and it means “rock.” I

In verse 12, Paul identifies at least four groups that have the Greek translation, and it also means “rock.” And they were divided up behind their favorite leaders: the Paul group, the a really interesting one. You see, as far as we know, I Apollos group, the Cephas (or Peter) group, and the Christ group over a pastor at Corinth. In Galatians 2:9, Paul tells us that Cephas and Peter had a strategic plan for their ministries. Paul

there's no telling how much this church would grow. I mean, he And it is the height of hypocrisy when we use was actually with Jesus. He's got to know way more than Paul language to hide our sinful hearts. And there are lots and Apollos combined." And it's easy for them to create this do that. We cloak gossip as prayer requests. We don't have an imaginary picture of Peter that's way better than the reality the relationships with non-Christians, and we say it's because we had experienced with Paul and Apollos. trying to be "holy." We make really foolish decisions

And then, finally, fourth on the list is the Christ group. "faith." Let's beware of that, Church. Let's be authentic. And I don't know about you, but at first, it shocked me that Paul that we don't hide behind our spiritual language. Let's be careful that we don't use the name of Jesus just to follow Christ," that's the right answer. We do follow Christ. But purposes or get our way or make ourselves feel important. The fact that Paul includes them as a problem group tells us that we are here to serve Jesus' purposes, not the other way around. even though they had the right words, they must have had the wrong heart. So this Christ group at Corinth was probably very arrogant. They were using Jesus to make themselves

And their wrong heart probably manifest itself in several ways. First, there could be an underlying arrogance when they say, "I follow Christ." They seem to be implying that they have a special claim on Christ that the other groups don't have. "You don't have any authority over me. I follow Christ." go ahead and follow Paul or Apollos or Peter; we're the only ones like the group in the church that says, "I've been here a long time and we're the only ones who are good enough to actually follow Christ anyway." any of those pastors. I don't answer to them. If anyth

“Look, guys, none of us follow a pastor. We all follow Jesus.” hypocrisy.

That would be a good thing to say. But instead of saying, “*We all follow Christ,*” they’re saying, “*I follow Christ. You* unspiritual group, the Peter group, and the Christ group. And it’s little peons may follow those people, but *I* know better.” And groups that Paul is saying, “You need to agree with or instead of calling the church to come together under Christ, they use Christ to set themselves apart, to make themselves look holier than everyone else, and to further divide the church. These groups helps us see the underlying causes of division in the Corinthian Church.

That’s why Paul’s immediate response in verse 13 is, “Is Christ divided?” Paul’s talking to all four groups here, “Why would you divide the Body of Christ according to human leaders?” But I think it’s especially relevant for the Christ group. He’s saying, “Christ isn’t divided, so why would you use the *name* of Christ to divide the *Body* of Christ?” The first cause of their division is that they let preferences divide them. I’m sure some of the Corinthians identified more with Paul’s teaching style, or with Apollonius’ personality, or with Peter’s passion. That’s only natural. The problem was, they then took their preferences and set the standard for the whole church. “I prefer Paul, and

So it’s possible that out of the four groups, the Christ group is actually the worst one. There’s probably a self-righteousness and a spiritual arrogance and a rebellious spirit behind their claim that makes it the worst of all. And that’s something for us to beware of. There’s a real danger that the that means it’s Paul or nothing. And if you don’t like or you expect me to do something other than what I like don’t want anything to do with you.” Their preference was their priority, and that created division. Do you hear that, Church? Do you see it? Ho

priority and demand that we get our way and expect the whole world to cater to us and put us first because we put ourselves first? Or will we see the difference in preferences as the opportunity to die to ourselves, to put others' desires before our own, and to grow in a Christ-like humility that says, "I defer to you. I don't have to get my way"? You see, our preferences be the ground for either great selfishness or great selflessness. And it all depends on what we do with our preferences: do we demand ours or do we defer to others?

And Church, I hope you can see just how many ways this applies to us. Some of us prefer formal dress in worship. Some of us prefer casual dress. Some of us prefer the preacher to wear a tie. Some of us prefer him not to wear a tie. Some of us prefer it to be as cold as a meat locker in here. Some of us prefer a sauna. Some of us prefer the sanctuary choir. Some of us prefer a praise band. Some of us prefer the Lord's Supper in the front. Some of us prefer it in the back. Some of us prefer hymns. Some of us prefer praise choruses. And you know I could list

So the first cause of division is when we make preferences a priority. The counter to that is that we care more about others than ourselves. The second cause of division might be even more subtle. These groups in the Corinthian Church had become proud of their leaders to be these larger-than-life heroes and brags about them and attaching this great worth to them and finding their identity in their leaders. And we see this

and listen to all their sermons and download all their songs. And ourselves. And, of course, the result is that we're divided there's nothing wrong with that, to a point. God intends for us to benefit from the gifts He has given to Christian leaders. The problem comes when we put our particular leader up on such a pedestal that we begin to idolize him, and we start to feel superior to others because we identify with *this* leader, and we look down on others who might identify with someone else, and we even begin to take what this particular leader says and treat it as absolute authority on the matter. In a real sense, we start to look more like followers of Beth Moore or Johnny Hunt or Rick Warren or John Piper than followers of Jesus Christ. By all means, benefit from the gifts God has given these men and women. Thank God for them. But don't give to them a devotion and a reverence that rightly belong to Jesus alone.

And notice the corollary of this. Part of our hero is that we reject all the other heroes. The Paul group is not going to submit to Apollos. The Apollos group is not going to submit to Paul. And the Christ group is not going to submit to anybody! So it's a type of pride that says, "Because I'm too good for them."

And there's a form of this that shows up way too many churches today, and I pray that we will be against it. Many people have a tendency to exalt the pastor when they first came to a church. And if it's only subconsciously, they always measure every

So hero worship was contributing to the division in the Corinthian Church, and it continues to be a problem for us today. And a very important question for us to ask is: Why? Why would we do church the way we did church in 1959 or 1979 or 1999?

*one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also others... that stance will never bring about the unity a baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't that our culture tells you it will bring. Because it's bu remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me Some things are true and others are false. The religio to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of humanworld don't lead to the same place. Christianity and I wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.” Judaism and Hinduism and Buddhism and Wicca all I*

In these verses, Paul lays the foundation for unity by different places, and they'll all tell you that. Those ar reminding them of the truth. “Is Christ divided? No, He's notdifferent religions, and peace and unity will not be fo divided! Was Paul crucified for you? No, Jesus was! Were ypretending they're all the same. Peace and unity will baptized into the name of Paul? No, you were baptized into theonly when we're united on the truth. And here's the t name of Jesus!” So Paul uses the truth to point out how foolishtruth: Truth is a person, and His name is Jesus Christ. is for the Corinthians to be dividing up behind their favorite peace and unity in the world? Point people to Jesus. leaders. Their leaders didn't die for them. They weren't baptiPeace of Peace. Any other effort to create unity is a f into the name of their leaders. So why would they be dividingcupa and, because unity will only be found in Jesus. Tha behind their leaders? Why would they be worshipping their mission as a church is so crucial. The world is depend leaders? Only Jesus died for them. Only Jesus deserves their and they don't even know it. They need to hear about worship... and Paul uses that truth to promote unity. You want peace in the Middle East? Lead the Muslim

This is huge for us: Unity is always built on the truth You want peace in Israel? Lead the Jews and Palestin about Jesus. Unlike a lot of people in our world today, Paul Jesus. You want peace with North Korea? Lead the I

their beliefs aren't true, and we love them so much that we want to lovingly introduce them to Jesus.

And by the way, I'm also not saying that everyone who

has ever operated under the name of Jesus has brought peace to the world. Terrible things have been cloaked in the name of Jesus by people who probably did not truly know Jesus. What I am saying is that unity is built on Jesus, so true unity comes when people truly know Jesus. That's why, in these verses, Paul lays a foundation for unity by reminding the Corinthians of truth about Jesus.

He says, "Look, you all are arguing about who your leaders are, and you're acting like it's important whether I baptized you or not. It doesn't matter if I baptized you! It doesn't matter *by* whom you were baptized; what matters is *in* whom you were baptized. So were you baptized into Jesus or not? Because Jesus is all that matters! If you're not focused on Jesus, you're focused on the wrong things."

Paul goes on to say, "I'm actually glad I didn't baptize

*Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."*

And let's make sure we really get what Paul is saying here, because it's the key to the whole text. He's *not* saying baptism is unimportant. We might be tempted to think that, but Paul is saying, "It doesn't matter who I baptized, because baptism doesn't matter." But that's not what he's saying. We know baptism was important to Paul. Paul himself was baptized in Acts 9. He writes about the significance of baptism in 1 Corinthians 12 and Colossians 2. In Acts 16, we read that Paul led people to Jesus in Philippi, and they were baptized. And in Acts 18, we read that Paul preached about Jesus in Corinth, and many people believed and were baptized. Baptism always had a significant place in Paul's ministry, so he's not saying that baptism is unimportant. What he *is* saying is that the gospel... the truth... the cross of Christ... is so important that it is infinitely more important than anything else.

What he *is* saying is that the gospel... the truth... the cross of Christ... is so important that it is infinitely more important than anything else.



get beyond just saying that we want to be united to actually being united? When we all realize the importance of the gospel, then we're united. When our one desire is for the cross of Christ to be proclaimed, then we're united. Because then, we're all committed to one thing: We're committed to lifting up Jesus. We're committed to proclaiming His gospel. And we are changed by the power of His cross. Jesus unites us.

So if we focus on our preferences, we'll be divided, because our preferences are different. If we give in to pride, we'll be divided, because my pride tells me that I'm the most important, and your pride tells you that you're the most important, so we disagree about what's most important, and we're divided. But if we look to the cross of Christ, and there we learn to die to ourselves, then we're united, because we're all focused on Jesus.

That's the big idea for today: Where pride and preferences divide us, the cross of Christ unites us. Where pride and preferences divide us, the cross of Christ unites us.