



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

“Corinthian Dissension”

TRANSCRIPT

Well, it's time for us to begin, and so let's open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee again for the opportunity to open the Scriptures and to consider the words that the apostles have written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. We thank Thee that this is the word of God that we are reading and pondering. And, Lord, again we ask that Thou art give us the desire to be obedient and submissive to it, and the power to be submissive to it as well.

We thank Thee for the way in which the word of God is so applicable to our present-day experiences and lives. We sense, Lord, that that is another one of the signs of its inspiration, that today, so many centuries after it was completed, it still is vital for life in the century in which we are living. We pray that tonight we may profit from the word of God and may by the grace of the Holy Spirit be allowed to apply some of the things that the apostle is writing about to us in this church and to us in our families and in our personal lives.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] We’re turning tonight to 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 10 through verse 17, and our subject is Corinthian Dissention. That’s what the apostle Paul brings up here. And so I’d like to begin by reading verses 10 through verse 17. The apostle writes:

“Now I plead you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all,” (that indicates of course that he is a Southerner [laughter] from Southern Tarsus, that y’all) “that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.”

Now, it is probably safe to say, universally, we believe that Chloe is a female. The term “household” is not in the text, so it’s simply, “by those of Chloe.” So we’re taking this as a reference to a lady.

“Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or, ‘I am of Cephas’” (This of course is the name for Peter. This is his Aramaic name Cephas, and there is no other reason for it other than the apostle seems to prefer it in this particular place) “or ‘I am of Christ.’ 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.” (Incidentally, this man, Gaius, is the man in whose house the Apostle Paul was when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans after this. You read the last chapter and you’ll find he makes reference to Gaius, and that he’s a guest of Gaius, and this is the individual converted during the time when Paul ministered in Corinth) “Lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also 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.”

In the Corinthian church, there was what might be called a *clique a quatre* – that is, a four-fold kind of clique as we have just read. It reminds us, again, that the problem of cliques, decisions, and schism is endemic to Christian churches. The reason it’s endemic to Christian churches is simply that human beings are in Christian churches. Schisms are endemic in our political factions, the Republican Party or the Democratic Party for the same reason: men are sinners. And so, consequently, they disagree and they often fight among themselves. And even in the Christian church, there are differences of opinion that arise and the apostle here, as you might expect, makes reference to it when he says let there be no schisms.

As a matter of fact, this word is the word from which we get the English word “schism.” It is s-ism, not sk-ism. And that’s a permissible thing with some, in some dictionaries, and even sh-ism is also permissible, at least it’s in our dictionaries. But if you want to speak good English, you say schism. Schism, schismatic. Don’t ask me why, because there are many other words that have the same beginning that are not pronounced like that particular one.

You may remember, too, that when the children of Israel came out of the land of Egypt and came into, well, the land on the way to the land of Israel, that was one of the first things that began to transpire in their experience. For example, in Exodus chapter 15, we read after they’ve come through the Red Sea at the beginning of this chapter we read these words -- well, it’s not the beginning. It’s later on in verse 23: “Now, when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah (which means bitter). And the people complained against Moses, saying, what shall we drink?”

And then in chapter 16 in verse 2 we read, then -- as they came to the Wilderness of Sin, “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.” Then chapter 17 in verse 1, “Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim: but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, Give us water.” And, in fact, in order to make it even more parallel with what we are talking about, they began to criticize Moses.

In chapter 12 of the Book of Numbers we read, “Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” And the Lord heard it. And you’ll remember that as a result of the judgment of the Lord God, Miriam was afflicted with leprosy. So there you have the same pattern of complaint with reference to God and then struggles and strives among the people of God.

If you look around today in the evangelical church then, it does not surprise you to know that there are many kinds of strifes within the different branches of the Christian church. One that I’m rather interested in, because it just happened to be something I’m particularly interested in, as I’ve mentioned from time to time, I grew up in a Presbyterian church, and I still have an interest in them from that stand point. And as a matter of fact, many of my family are still in that church. And when I go home to Charleston, South Carolina, that’s the church in which I go with my family, and sit in the church that I sat in as a teenager.

There’s been a constant struggle in that church now for a century over what is called the regulative principle. And the regulative principle is simply this; it is and was the view of the Presbyterian Church in the last century that no kind of music should exist in the meetings of the church except the singing of the hymns by the congregation. No

special numbers, no person standing behind the pulpit and singing a song. No instruments. And that was characteristic of the Presbyterian Church. The reason is that they believe that all worship should be specifically set forth by the word of God. And the things that were not set forth in the word of God were inventions and were not to be followed.

Now, the Lutherans had a different idea. They had the idea and they practiced this, that if the Bible doesn’t say anything against it, it’s okay to do it, providing it doesn’t, you know, violate some special principle. But the Presbyterians or the Reform people generally said, “No, it must be specifically supported by specific Scripture.” Now, those people that argued this -- and they were the leaders in what is known as the PCUS, the Presbyterian Church in the United States before it united in the big church -- those people would turn over in their graves if they saw what was going on today in the churches. And they struggled with that, and they had strife over it because it was for them a doctrinal question.

Today, we don’t have that particular strife, although in evangelicalism there is a good bit of contention over the place of entertainment in the meetings of the Christian churches. And we have evangelical churches who have considerable emphasis on what might be called entertainment and certainly a much wider use of music, and that is part of it, but not simply music. There is ballet and drama and things like this, which is regarded by some as a legitimate means for the proclamation of the gospel or the word of God.

Today we are having a good bit of strife over the place of psychology in Christian life and in the Christian churches. There is also strife over the extent to which a church may be entangled with and united with organizationally with a larger denomination which has turned away from the biblical principles of the word of God. There are many people who say, no, we must stay where we are and preach the word where we are because it’s our opportunity, and we just will not be part of the larger body of which we are part, organizationally only. So we have strife like that.

In evangelical churches that we know, there has come considerable amount of strife over the place of signs and wonders. John Wimber and others associated with him and the Vineyard movement have made a contention to the effect that a person is not really preaching the gospel biblically if signs and wonders are not being performed in the meetings of the church in conjunction with the gospel. In other words, if I should preach the gospel as purely as the Apostle Paul, but I did not perform some miracles of healing or tongues or words of knowledge prophecy, and I would not be biblically preaching the gospel. And we still -- and we do have considerable contention over that in our church and our churches. So it’s not surprising that we have these differences of opinion. The apostle here urges, pleads with the Corinthians that there be no schisms among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

John Calvin had a particular word for this. He talked about the schisms that were existing in Corinth and referred to them, and he referred to it in such a way as it was his general view with reference to dissensions that they were the deadly poison in all the churches. And he condemns those who are involved in things that are legitimately the cause of dissension for building the church with shoddy material. I think you can see from that that he would have leaned very heavily upon the regulative principle, for that matter.

Well, now the apostle in verse 10 and verse 11 makes him plea. He’s not going to leave this question of divisions, incidentally, and contentions until chapter 4 in verse 21, and will you notice what he says in chapter 4 and verse 21? After saying in verse 20, “For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of gentleness?” And so for him, the question of dissension in the church was a very serious thing, and therefore, when he came he expected if there was no change that there would be discipline exercised in the church in Corinth.

Now, I plead with you, divisions -- incidentally you’ll notice that he pleads by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s interesting because in a moment he will mention some other names. He will mention Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and he will even mention our Lord as with reference to those who were naming his name as being a name for their party. So he begins by saying, “I’m pleading with you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For him, that was the name, and that was the ground upon which a legitimate appeal could be made. It’s in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The authoritative name, the powerful name behind which and in support of which God in heaven stands.

Now, he said to them that I want you to be -- I’m pleading with you to be of the same mind, of the same judgment, and that you be perfectly joined together in it. Some of the translations read, speak the same thing. In fact, in the earlier part of the verse, I should make reference to it, he says that you all speak the same thing. That’s an interesting thing because that seems to suggest that we should all just go around and parroting the very same words. And in some churches, that’s practically what they do. They are so committed to a particular form of theology that almost every word is in harmony with what everyone else says, because if it’s not in harmony, in some churches, a person will not have the kind of respect from his fellow church members if he doesn’t speak the same word.

Well, Paul is not really speaking primarily about saying the same thing. This is an idiomatic expression; it means simply to be in agreement, to be in harmony. It may even have the sense of being in unity, a biblical kind of unity. It, of course, suggests that there should be an agreement on the doctrinal things of the word of God.

This very first word means, literally “to say the same thing,” and it’s found in a first century gravestone of a married couple. That raises interesting questions. But those who have described that word on the side of the gravestone have gone out of the way to say, “This is not a reference of a yes-man mentality, but simply that the two, the husband and the wife, work together in a harmonious relationship.” But I want you to know if they

were speaking the same thing, which one do you think would be the originator of it? I’m not saying, I’m just asking you [laughter], which one would be saying it and which one would be following the other? That’s my theological question for you tonight. Speak the same thing. I think it means simply that they should be harmonious in the things that they believe concerning our Lord, and it does not mean that they should not have honest differences of opinion over Scripture providing there were no schisms, and there was no dissension as a result of it.

Now, he also says that he would like for them to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and of the same judgment. This is an interesting word because this is a word that was used with reference to surgeons setting bones. And so you could say that the Apostle Paul, like an experienced, spiritual surgeon, is touching the wound very gently. He is very careful not to do something that a good surgeon would do and do harm while he’s seeking to do the kind of work that will bring ultimate healing. He wants them to be perfectly joined together.

This is a word, incidentally, that is used in Galatians chapter 6 in verse 1 in an interesting place, which I think is a bit enlightening for this, because the author there says: “Brethren, if a man be over taken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.’ To restore, that is, to set, and set the bones in such a way that healing will take place. This is a football word. I’m sure anybody playing football could enter into this experience because there’s so much need in our football today for physicians to set bones after injuries. The word also was used in the New Testament of the mending of fishing nets.

So what Paul is then saying is, like a good surgeon, he wants the Corinthians to have their bones properly set so that there may be healing and a healthy church follow in which they say the same thing, they’re in harmony concerning the things of the word of God, that there be no contentions among them, that the nets be mended, so to speak, and harmony exist. Not uniformity, but probably at least a form of unity.

Verse 11 explains why, “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household that there are contentions among you.” This is why the apostle makes this plea. He knows from information given to him that problems do exist there. This tells us a little something about those of Chloe’s household. They went frankly to the apostle. And not only did they go frankly to the apostle, but they obviously did not mind, Paul did not think, that they would mention his name to the Corinthians. So it was open and above board as far as they are concerned.

That itself is something that it seems to me is instructive for us in the church. If there are really things in the Christian church, if there are really things in Believer’s Chapel that are deserving of discipline, then we should go to the elders and speak plainly with reference to it, and be willing also if we do this, to be called to answer those questions in evidence. That’s my particular opinion. I’m not serving as one of the elders now, of course, but it appears to me that is what the New Testament supports. And those in Chloe’s household, they told the apostle about the problems that were there, and the apostle mentions their names. He doesn’t mention specifically their names. He just says, those of Chloe’s household. The Corinthians would no doubt know.

Now, further clarification is given in verse 12: Now I say this, that each of you says -- And these are the things that various ones were saying -- some were saying “I am of Paul,” some were saying, “I am of Apollos.” Others were saying, “I am of Cephas.” And then there were some who were saying, “I am of Christ.” I’m not absolutely certain that this is precisely what they were saying. Now, you are justified in asking why.

In chapter 3 in verse 4 the apostle says, “But when one says, ‘I am of Paul’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are ye not carnal?” Well, the reason I say what I’m saying is that in chapter 4 in verse 6 the apostle says these words, “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written. That none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” And that verse may mean -- I know it’s shocking to you that I

would say *may mean*, after all, Dr. Johnson, don’t you talk dogmatically? Occasionally. But, nevertheless, there are some places where it’s wise to say *I think*. I’m not sure about this but that verse can mean that what Paul is saying is, he’s used the names of Paul, Apollos, and Peter, but he really is referring to several other people. He’s used their names and he’s talking about the contentions using the names of himself and Apollos and Peter, but the specific names he’s leaving out of his letter, that may be what we are to understand. But we’ll leave it like this, after all, he does say, some are saying I am of Paul, some saying I am of Apollos, and so on.

Well, what are these parties designed to represent? What are people meaning when they say, “I am of Paul?” What would be the reason? Well, the reason would obviously be, the apostle was the founder, the founding evangelist of the church in Corinth. We read in our first study, Acts chapter 18, and said some things about that. In Acts chapter 18, the apostle describes the ministry that took place. That is, the writer of Acts describes the ministry of the apostle when he came to Corinth and the preaching that took place there. So the apostle is the one who was the human instrumentality bringing them into faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He says in chapter 4 in verse 15, “But though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel.” So the apostle regards the Corinthians as being *his* spiritual children, generally. He speaks of having begotten them. So you can see why there would be some who would say, “I am of Paul.”

And then Apollos. Apollos is one of the most interesting characters in the New Testament, to my mind. Probably now among scholars, when questions are raised about the authorship of the Epistle of the Hebrews and speculation is made, some of the wisest of the students speculate that if we’re looking for some name for the author of the Epistle of the Hebrews, it would be Apollos. The reason would simply be that he was from the area of Alexandria. The kind of language in the Epistle of the Hebrews is representative of that particular part of the world. It was the home of the most illustrious university

around the Mediterranean Sea. If Luke speaks about Tarsus, I think it’s Paul’s words that he was a citizen of Tarsus, that was no mean city. Well, it was a mean city in comparison with Alexandria. So when Apollos came, and you remember he came to Ephesus and taught the word of God there, taught it magnificently, but there were things he did not know that we might call were dispensational weaknesses, because he’d been out of the mainstream of what was happening, and he did not understand that.

And so Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and went over the things of the word of God with him. He went over to Corinth. And we read in Acts chapter 18 and chapter 19 that he helped those people over there significantly. When he went over we read, “And when he was decided to cross to Achaia” (that is to, of course where Corinth was) -- “the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who believed through grace.”

So he was the kind of individual that might be called an Alexandrian scholar from the home of good scholarship. The Greek translation of the Old Testament was made in that general area, at least associated with it. He was an intellectual. The kind of languages that he uses indicates that. You read the Book of Acts and the description of him is really a remarkable description. It says this man had been instructed in the way of the Lord. He was fervent in spirit. He spoke and taught accurately the things of the word, but he knew only the baptism of John. But then notice the word said just before that, he was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. Remarkable Old Testament scholar, we would say. Well, that’s precisely, of course, what the Epistle of the Hebrews is. It’s a remarkable epistle in which the author uses the Old Testament in a remarkable way.

Well, I think you can see from this that coming over to Corinth, the Corinthians were a kind of people who liked elites anyway. They would have been very much attracted to Apollos. So I’m quite sure there would be people who would arise and say, “I am of Apollos,” particularly when you compare him with Paul because Paul -- we look

of Paul of course as great. I look at him as great. If I wanted someone to copy, I would want to copy Paul because I think that he handles the word of God in a way that is remarkable. But listen to what they said about him. This is what he said they said about him: For his letters they say are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible. Some of the translations read, I believe the NIV has something, *amounts to nothing*. So you can see that when Apollos should come on the scene after the Apostle Paul, he would have many people attracted to him.

And the Cephas party, why were there people who said, “I am of Cephas,” perhaps? We’re speculating a bit because the Bible doesn’t make this plain. Well, we do know that when Paul came to Corinth he spoke in the synagogue and had success in the synagogue. In fact, the one who was the head of the synagogue was converted and then later another one was converted. And so he preached there, and you’ll remember, he took the Old Testament and he inserted the name of the Lord Jesus in the places of the Old Testament that were Messianic prophecies. So you can see how there would be those within the Christian church who were of Jewish background. And then furthermore, we know this from Galatians and other places, they had special foods and food laws that they still followed. So I can understand how there might have been some kosher issues in Corinth and dissension over the things that we ought to eat, whether we should eat pizza or not, or whatever it might be. So a Petrine party we would see arising as coming from a Jewish background, the synagogue, and saying, “I am of Peter.” We should follow him.

And then of course there were those who were saying, as you might expect, “I am of Christ.” These are the illuminati, anathema upon these hero worshipers. These that go around talking about Paul and Apollos and Peter, we follow Christ. So they were the kind of individuals that sit lightly to human leadership, a kind of super spiritual elite. Now, remember we’re speculating. But there does seem some justification for it from human nature, we know. And the discussions we have, and in the arguments we occasionally

have, the friendly arguments we have. We have individuals who will say something very much like that, “Well, I’m just going to follow what our Lord says, and so and so. And so this, the apostle writes, is further clarification of the problems that existed in Corinth according to those of the household of Chloe.

Now, the argumentation that the apostle uses in rebuttal is very, very important. Now, notice what he says. There are actually three arguments. One of them has to do with the integrity of Christ, *is Christ divided?* Another has to do with the cross of Christ, *was Paul crucified for you?* And the third has to do with the ownership and lordship of Christ, where he says *were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

Now, let’s just for a few moments -- we have a little over twenty minutes, let’s take a look at these three arguments that focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, who Paul feels is being torn to pieces by the dissension that exists there; because the apostles conception of the local church is of a body of people who are united together in a common life; one body related to one another spiritually in the oneness of the local church. What a magnificent thing that would be, if our local churches -- if this local church could be said to be united together with our Lord Jesus Christ in that sense.

So the first argument is, *is Christ divided?* Has the Lord Jesus Christ been distributed, so to speak, so that we each have a little bit? Some have maybe a little bit more than others, but he’s been divided up among us, so that some of us have some and others do not have a very large part of him.

I was reading one of the more recent books on 1 Corinthians, and there was a very comical paragraph the author writes with reference to this. He said, “Is Christ divided or literally, has Christ been parceled out?” Paul is asking the Corinthians with all their divisions, do you suppose that there are fragments of Christ that can be distributed among different groups? If you have Christ, you have all of him. He says, Jesus cannot be divided. We cannot have half a person, as though we said to someone coming to our house, please come in but leave your legs outside. We cannot say things like that. So the

idea of the local church is of a body that is one in Christ. Is Christ divided? Some of you have part of him and others do not have part of him? No, we all have Christ. You often have Christians say, I would love to have more of Christ. No, you cannot have anymore of Christ if you are a believer than you have already.

Now, it is true that you may not be experiencing all that you have. In fact, what you really should be praying is asking the Lord to take more of you by his grace. But as far as our Lord is concerned, we have all of him, every individual one of us has all of him, so we don’t pray that we might have more of Christ. So this is the first of his arguments: Christ is not distributed about among us, we all have all of Christ. He’s not divided.

The second argument is one that gathers around the cross. He says, *Was Paul crucified for you?* Now, we know that our debt is totally directed toward the Lord Jesus Christ. We are his debtors, because he is the one who has ransomed us and renewed us, made us new in himself, not Paul, not Peter, not Apollos, not any gifted teacher. It’s true. I’ve had people say to me, occasionally, not in this church now, because you are part of the illuminati now, of course, “Dr. Johnson’s the one who converted me.” I heard them say that. They actually have said that. They mean, of course, I preached the gospel, and it was then while the preaching that I was giving, they were converted. But the apostle makes it very plain that Christ was crucified for them. Paul was not crucified to them. Our debt is to our Lord. Our debt is not to the man who preached the gospel to us. He was the instrumentality, and we’re thankful for him and for his faithfulness, but our debt is to the Lord. What do you do when you, in a sense, say with reference to an individual that you are indebted to him? In one sense, you are renouncing the blessing of redemption. So the -- John Calvin says that when a person gives credit to someone else, that’s what he’s doing.

Now, I have been writing a lengthy paper on the subject of the Virgin Mary, the saints -- that is the Roman Catholic saints, the church, saints as understood by them -- and then the priesthood. And one of the things that I’ve been writing about particularly, here

and there, is the treasury of merit, which the Roman Catholic Church believes in. They believe -- of course, the Roman Catholic doctrine is a salvation by works, various kinds of works. They vehemently deny that, but it comes down to it in almost every one of their sacraments that have anything to do with the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism, baptism is the means of forgiveness of sins, not simply original sin but other sins as well. And then extreme unction. That, too, is a means of the forgiveness of sins. Every time on Sunday, the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper is observed. The sacrifice of the mass takes place, and that sacrifice is the means of the forgiveness of sins, continually goes on. So sins are being forgiven by water, by bread, by wine, by oil, and then when you get to the end of life and you still don’t have the certainty of eternal forgiveness, you’re in a purgatory and there, too, fire will operate as a cleansing agent. One of the things, the ways by which you may escape from part of the guilt or penalty of your sin is the treasury of merit.

Now, the treasury of merit is composed of the merits of the saints of the church that have redounded to the church because of their faithful service, usually some outstanding work. The martyrs, for example, by their martyrdom, they won merits. And these merits may be given out to individuals who need some merit. All of you folks would need merit. You’d be just like those people in Martin Luther’s day. You would be wanting some indulgences, because those indulgences you would pay for in order to have some of your sins forgiven.

Now, the treasury of merit means -- what does that mean? If for example, I’m able to pay some money, win and obtain an indulgence so that what some martyr did is imputed to my account, by whom am I saved? Am I saved totally by Jesus Christ? No, I’m not saved totally by Jesus Christ. I’m saved by Jesus Christ plus what that martyr did. So the treasury of merit itself is another way of downgrading the significance of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, was Paul crucified for you? Was saint so-and-

so a martyr for your benefit? No, we don’t need them. We have Christ who has paid for sin, all sin, in the sacrifice on Calvary’s cross.

So they were in a sense renouncing the blessing of redemption by not depending totally upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Was Paul crucified for you? The martyrs are not partners of our Lord Jesus Christ in the forgiveness of our sins. The sacraments, which are means by which our sins may be forgiven according to Roman Catholic Church teaching, are not really partners with our Lord. Our Lord has accomplished a once-and-for-all sacrifice.

The Lord’s Supper, incidentally, is what has been called a sacrament of reconciliation. One of the reasons -- one of the reasons that we observe the Lord’s Supper so frequently in this church is because it’s so significant in reminding us of the person to whom we owe our salvation. And so we take the bread and the wine and remember him in the sense of what he has done for us. And it’s constantly brought to our attention as we sit in the Lord’s Supper and reflect upon what Christ has done. That’s one of the greatest privileges that one could possibly have. The Christian church began doing that. You read the historical records of the first century, and that’s the way they begin. That’s the reason why in the Roman Catholic church in its own perverted way, now, still observes the Eucharist every Sunday for individuals. So was Paul crucified for you? No. Christ was crucified for me. So I don’t honor Paul. I’m not a member of the Paul party. I’m not a member of the Peter party.

And then he says, *or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* To be baptized into someone’s name was to sign over one’s life to that person. That’s what we do in the figure of baptism. When we go down into the water and come up out of the water, we are identifying ourselves with our Lord and his death, burial, and resurrection and acknowledging the fact that we owe our lives to him. He is our one and only master. And we have signed over our lives to him. We say, “We belong to the Lord.” So you can see when we talk about different groups in the church, what we are really doing is

dividing up allegiance, which should be totally to our Lord Jesus Christ. And one of the magnificent things also about the Lord’s Supper is that we gather around, all of us, who may have tendencies, all of us do, a tendency, “I am of Warfield,” or, “I am of Calvin,” or, “I am of some other Christian man whose writings we have reveled in.” At the Lord’s Supper, we are reminded over and over again to whom we really belong, and to whom all of our men that we respect and appreciate belong as well: the ownership and Lordship of Christ.

Now, the apostle says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.” Isn’t that interesting? If baptism is part of the gospel, would it be possible for Paul to say, I thank God that I didn’t baptize anyone but Crispus and Gaius? And then he says, “Well, I did baptize the household of Stephanas, besides I don’t know whether I was baptized by any other.” He tells us in the 15th chapter of this book that it’s the gospel by which you are saved.

And so if we are saved by the gospel, if baptism is part of the gospel, we’d be saved by the gospel. But Paul says no. He said, Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. If baptism’s really part of the gospel, he couldn’t say that. So he sent me to preach the gospel, and he sent me to preach the gospel in a specific way, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

That’s a magnificent statement reminding us that the apostle’s commission involved the preaching of the gospel. It did not involve an embellishment of the truth with flowery speech or particularly the professional rhetorician, because that’s, I think, what he’s talking about when he says *in wisdom of word*. Because if we explain the gospel in such a way that individuals are attracted to the way that we say it, rather than the truth of the gospel, what we have done is what he says here, we’ve made the gospel of no effect. The gospel is the statement of our sin, of Christ’s saving work, and of the means by which we might be saved. I’m sure that one of the things that made Paul the success that he was was that he did not proclaim the gospel in a flowery rhetorical way

that impressed the Corinthians and others by the language and the diction and the skills with which he set forth the gospel. He set forth the fact of sin, the fact of redemption through Christ, the necessity of turning to him in faith, and those things were always there. And flowery speech was not allowed to, in any way, make the cross of no effect, to empty it of its power.

Well, I would imagine that when the Corinthians read this, those who were fighting among themselves, that they would have some interesting questions to put to themselves and also some interesting discussions among themselves and a realization of the fact that they have all of Christ, that all have all of Christ, that all are in him, and there are differences that we have, but they are not the significant things. The oneness that we have, the life that we have together as believers, that’s the thing that binds us together. And we cannot have dissensions and schisms. And dissension and schisms actually do damage to the work of the one who redeemed us and gave himself for us at the cost of the blood of Calvary.

Do you belong to him? Is he your Savior? Is he the one in whom you trust wholeheartedly? May that be so. Let’s bow in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the opportunity to study the Scriptures and particularly to be put by Thee in the position of those early believers who were brought to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the freshness of the preaching of the gospel by the apostles. We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon each one present, upon their families. And for any who may hear the message later, may their response to the gospel for Jesus’ sake and glory. We pray in his name. Amen.