

## A CRISIS OF DIVISION

by Doug Goins

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In the introduction to this series in the last message, I suggested that 1 Corinthians is a helpful, much-needed section of Scripture that speaks to the struggles we have as Christians living at the end of the twentieth century. The problems, pressures, and perversities that faced the believers in the Corinthian church still trouble us today. Things haven't changed all that much in either the culture or the church. The apostle Paul deals with our difficulties incisively and communicates the triumph of Jesus Christ in his crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification. Coming to understand his exaltation helps us to be obedient to the truth in the midst of the trials and temptations we face in a society that is very much like the Corinthian culture.

One of the things I have found compelling in reading and rereading this letter is that Paul wrote it out of a heart of love. Paul speaks passionately about doctrine, struggles in the church, and personal relationships. His heart of love comes through powerfully. We saw that love even in the salutation of the letter. What he does is wed revelational truth—the revealed word of God—to relational truth. He had credibility in his apostolic authority partly because he lived among these people and poured his life out for them in love. This letter has touched me deeply. I long for the assurance of my eternal status as a forgiven sinner, and I need to understand the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. These are central themes in this letter.

At the same time, each of us has personal frustrations that we wrestle with. We want to discover what the power of the Holy Spirit means in our lives. We want to understand the dynamic of real love at work in human relationships. We want to understand how we've been gifted and empowered to have an effect for the Lord in ministry. Questions that the Corinthian church struggled with persist: Is it possible to have unity that is really based only on Jesus Christ in the church today, or do we need something more? How does the gospel respond to the moral illness of the culture that we live in? And most of all, how can we live out our lives in such an attractive way that people will be drawn to Christ in us? Paul responds to these questions, problems, and aching human needs of the folks in Corinth who sat under his teaching in this fiery, personal, energetic letter.

Again, we saw how loving Paul was as he began the letter, even though he is going to have to challenge them about sinful failure. He began by reminding them of their identity and their standing in Christ. He reminded them of the tremendous resources that they had been given in Christ, even though they hadn't been living up to them. They were enriched in Christ, gifted for service. Whether they were living like it or not, they were still saints, called-out ones, beloved of God. And they had God's sovereign guarantee for the future; they knew how the story was going to end for them.

Now in verse 10, having lovingly commended them, he launches into a discussion of sinful failure. He starts out with the issue of division within the community of faith. The fact that he puts this problem first, and will devote four chapters to dealing with it, indicates that he considers it very important. Let's read verses 10-17:

**Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not**

**send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, that the cross of Christ should not be made void.**

## **Surrendering our rights to preserve unity**

Verse 10 is an appeal for them to choose unity and reject the division that was at work in their church congregation. In the first half of verse 10 there are three phrases that underline the basis of the appeal that Paul is making to these Corinthian Christians.

First, notice that it's an exhortation, not a command. He is not going to boss them around with his apostolic authority. The flavor of that word "exhort" is very important. An exhortation is an appeal to make a willing choice. He wants to convince them to make the right choice based on an understanding of truth, not based on his throwing his weight around.

Second, he addresses them as brethren, or brothers and sisters (verse 11). Again, he is subtly softening the rebuke that he has to deliver. He identifies himself with them: "We are in this together as brothers and sisters in Christ." He is also reminding them that they belong together and have a common identity in Jesus Christ. It argues the wrongness of their divisions, because such things deny who they are.

Third, the appeal is grounded in the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. In verse 9, they had been called into fellowship with God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. And now they are being lovingly exhorted to live in unity "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Because they're one in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, they ought to be one in fellowship with each other.

Then in the second half of verse 10 Paul defines the nature of the unity he wants them to experience. He makes two positive appeals and one negative appeal. The first positive appeal is that they agree, or literally, that they all speak the same thing. This term is an idiom from classical Greek. It was always used to describe political parties or communities that were free from factions; all agreed on what the party platform was, and there was no competition. We commonly hear the same kind of language today from Democrats and Republicans who call for party unity, because disunity undermines their effectiveness. So Paul is calling the Corinthian Christians to make up their differences and let go of their party slogans. We're going to see examples of those slogans that wipe out unity in verse 12.

The other positive appeal is in the phrase "that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment." "Made complete" may be translated "united" or "perfectly joined." The Greek verb means restoring something that has been broken, torn, or damaged to its rightful condition. It is used in the New Testament of mending nets that are torn or bones that are broken. The point is that the Corinthian church needed restorative action in their fellowship, and Paul says it's going to come through having the same mind and the same judgment. It's a unique way of thinking together.

Now, what is the mind that the church ought to share in common? The New Testament calls it the mind of Christ, and Paul talks about it in his letter to the Philippians (2:5): "Have this attitude [mind] in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." The mind of Christ is the willingness to give up rights or personal privilege, to give in, to take a lower place. For Jesus it meant giving up the right to his life, to die purposefully for the good of someone else, a vicarious action. Paul understood that when everyone decides to put the things of Christ first, when people in the church are willing to suffer loss that the honor and glory of Christ might be advanced, it will bring harmony and unity to the congregation. We're not to consider our needs the most important, but we're to commit ourselves to serve the needs of others. We're to come to church not with a sense of entitlement but with a desire for servanthood. We're to concern ourselves not with how other people ought to respond to us but with how God can use us in relationships.

Paul defines the threat to unity negatively using a very strong word, *schismata* (from which we get the word "schism"), which is translated "divisions." This word is used in the gospels to depict a tear in a garment or a

wrong opinion about Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that these are not minor things. They have no place in the body of Christ. No matter how minor it may seem to us, what we're differing over, the ultimate effect will be destructive to the health of relationships in the church.

Another important point is that divisions undermine our witness before a watching world. Our loving unity in Jesus Christ is one of the most powerful evangelistic tools we have. Our unity as the church was on the mind of the Lord Jesus the night before his crucifixion. He told his disciples in the upper room that their love for one another would be the mark by which people would know that they belonged to him. And then he prayed for that in John 17:20-21: "My prayer is not for them alone [the twelve disciples]. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message [that includes us; we've come to faith in Christ because of the faithful witness of these apostles in the Scriptures], that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

## **Displaced loyalty**

Now Paul faces the fact that there are schisms at work in verses 11-12: "For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'" When Paul deals with problems with the church, he is not the least bit subtle, indirect, or dialogical. He is very pointed and specific. He states the problem as a fact, not a rumor. The phrase "I have been informed" is a technical term describing official evidence in court. Paul cares very much about truth; he is not willing to deal with unsubstantiated rumors. He says he knows this is true because there were eyewitnesses, and he names the original source of the information. Remember, Paul is writing back to Corinth from Ephesus. Apparently the slaves or freedmen of a woman named Chloe in the church in Ephesus had traveled to Corinth and then brought back the information about the disunity there to Paul.

He defines the problem as quarreling, literally bitter words. This isn't minor bickering. The same word is listed among the destructive fruits of the flesh in Galatians 5:20, where it's called strife. Quarreling or strife is evil. Paul says it's very serious, and the fact that it's going on among Paul's brothers and sisters in Christ, people who should be united under the lordship of Jesus, makes it worse.

He gets specific in verse 12. Four times the word "I" is used. This whole thing bristled with ego. The problem was that everyone in the church was taking sides in strife centered around personalities. Paul quotes these four divisive slogans of the cliques or fan clubs in the Corinthian church. The first group comprised those who were loyal to Paul as the spiritual father of the church. This group consisted of the charter members of the church (remember, the church was only five or six years old at this point). They were most likely Gentile converts, so one of the emphases of their faith would center on the freedom they had in Christ. They took great pride in the fact that they had been in the church from the beginning. They had been converted under the preaching of Paul himself, and those whom he had baptized wore that like a badge of distinction.

The second group was loyal to Apollos. Apollos was a powerful, eloquent preacher, and people who were especially drawn to preaching loved his style in the pulpit. We first meet this young man Apollos in the New Testament after Paul has left Corinth in Acts 18. There is a very positive description of him. He came from Alexandria, which was the seat of Old Testament allegorical studies. Rhetoric, public speaking, and debate were popular in Alexandria, and he brought all of that to Corinth. Acts says that he was eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures (Old Testament), fervent in spirit, and bold. Priscilla and Aquilla had to straighten out his theology a bit, because all he understood was the baptism of John the Baptist. But once they presented the full, complete gospel of Christ to him, he understood it and preached it passionately.

Then Apollos came to Corinth to serve there, and we know from Paul's other letters that he was thrilled that God gave the Corinthians that resource after he left. With great skills in debate, Apollos would seem a natural leader for those who wanted to intellectualize Christianity. The Corinthian culture, like the culture in Alexandria, loved oratory, rhetoric, philosophizing. And the church in Corinth included people who had been converted out of a background of Greek philosophy and academia. They would be naturally drawn to Apollos. Paul already told us in verse 5 that these people were rich "in all speech and all knowledge."

C. K. Barrett, a New Testament scholar, writes about the relationship between the cliques following Apollos and Paul: "It is easy to understand that, in a church where gifts of the tongue were rated high, the appearance of a particularly eloquent preacher would awaken partisanship--and some contempt for the founder--who was despised as a speaker by some in Corinth." In 2 Corinthians Paul quotes some of his detractors: "Paul's personal appearance is unimpressive, and his speech is contemptible." Paul admits in 2 Corinthians that he was unskilled in speech. He couldn't hold a candle to Apollos. Apollos' supporters would have said, "We'd much rather listen to Apollos than Paul. Apollos makes the Scriptures come alive. We're so blessed when he preaches."

The third group was of Cephas, which was Peter's Aramaic name before Jesus changed his name to *Petros*. These were probably the traditionalists in the church, Jewish Christians who had deep roots in the faith of their fathers. There is no indication that Peter ever visited Corinth, although he may have. But he was undoubtedly looked up to by these Jewish Christians because of his identity as one of the original twelve apostles and because of his connection with the mother church in Jerusalem, which was predominantly Jewish. Members of this group were probably not too comfortable with the Gentile members who had been converted out of paganism, who paid no attention to Jewish history, tradition, or culture. In contrast to Paul's adherents, who may have advocated freedom which could have led to license--and Paul will deal with the problem of licentiousness, a misunderstanding of grace--Peter's adherents probably embraced a much more conservative, legalistic approach to living the Christian life.

Now, we need to remember that these three men themselves agreed in their theology. Peter and Apollos and Paul weren't competing with each other, they were in one accord. Remember how hard Peter and Paul had had to work to iron out their theological differences, because it had taken Peter awhile to understand the relationship he could have with Gentile converts because of being in Christ. But that had all been resolved. The problem was with the Corinthians who had rallied around one or another of these men because of his style, personality, or unique emphasis in Christianity.

The fourth party named was the Christ party. These were the purists, those who sounded the most spiritual. It was probably the worst of the four parties. There was a self-righteous smugness about these folks. They basically said, "We don't need human leaders at all. Jesus is the head of the body, and we'll just listen to him. We're not going to listen to Paul or Apollos or Peter." This group would have been religiously intimidating in the life of that fellowship, claiming superiority in Bible study and prayer and worship. These were folks you would have heard saying, "The Lord spoke to me on this matter...." They were spiritual elitists who were unwilling to submit themselves even to the apostolic authority that Jesus Christ had defined and put in place for the church. They were just as divisive as the other three groups.

These kinds of cliques can exist here at PBC; this is not just ancient history. I've been here almost twenty years now, and I overlapped a bit with the first generation of leadership that God gave us, the founding fathers of this church. At times I have heard hints of generational competition. Some people would embrace the influence, presence, and teaching of that first circle of godly, wonderful men in leadership, but they're a bit suspicious of the next generation and the one following. Others may be new in this place, and never having known that first generation at all, these folks might be a bit suspicious of them, because we're the ones they know and appreciate. We have a much longer history than the church in Corinth did. But even now in the leadership that God has in place here among elders, deacons, pastors, and leaders in all different kinds of ministries, the multiplicity and diversity in leadership style, teaching style, and emphasis can bring about a Corinthian crisis of disunity in which loyalties are given to certain people exclusively. Human nature enjoys following human leaders. We tend to identify more with spiritual leaders whose ministries we understand, whose vocabulary we are the most comfortable with. Instead of emphasizing the message of the word, the Corinthians emphasized the messengers. The Corinthians got their eyes off of the Lord and onto the Lord's servants, and this is what led to competition.

Paul is going to point out in chapter 3 that there can be no competition among true servants of God. It's sinful for church members to compare pastors or leaders, for believers to essentially become disciples of men rather than disciples of the living Lord of the church. Any personality cult in the church is in direct disobedience to the word of God. Paul reminds us who our leader is in Colossians 1:18: "He [Jesus] is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; so that He Himself might come to

have first place in everything."

Paul is going to go on in the next verses to describe why this divisiveness is so foolish and wrong. It's obvious from his language that he was deeply distressed by it. When we divide our loyalties between individuals in leadership, we lose something precious. It's a serious threat to the life of the church to find people choosing favorite teachers to the degree that they're not even going to come to a given meeting unless their favorite happens to be leading it. Paul declares that sort of exclusivity wrong.

When I was going to seminary, I spent a couple of years working on the staff of Calvin Crest Conference Center, a Presbyterian camp in the Sierras. I worked under a program director named Noreen Nazarian, a very wise, godly woman who gave great leadership to the staff there. Every summer we would hire a hundred college students to staff the center. Both years at orientation I heard Noreen say to the students, "You're going to be privileged to sit under many different teachers, preachers, and speakers this summer. Avail yourself of all of them. I don't ever want to hear you say, 'I can't learn anything from that teacher.' Sure, there will be people who talk differently, people you have to work harder to benefit from. But God put them there for your advantage. If I hear you say, 'I can't learn from that person,' it's not their fault, it's your immature arrogance." None of us will ever outgrow that counsel.

### **The destructive effects of division**

In verses 13-16 Paul talks about the destructive effects of this division. There are three things that happen if we allow it to continue: It divides the work of Christ, it overemphasizes human leadership, and it distorts the meaning of spiritual symbols. He asks three rhetorical questions, and there is an edge to these questions. He has a point he wants to make. (I said this is not very dialogical.) The first question, at the beginning of verse 13: "Has Christ been divided?" Literally it says, "Has Christ been chopped up in pieces and passed around?" Our Bibles don't say that because such imagery is so shocking and grotesque. The person and work of Jesus Christ don't come in different self-contained packages. We could paraphrase Paul's question this way: "Do you really want to limit yourself to only one leader's understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as if he or she has the most important part of Christ?" No one Christian teacher, including the apostle Paul, has had a totally complete view of Jesus Christ. We need the whole counsel of God communicated by a great diversity of teachers and preachers of Biblical truth. The New Testament apostles understood this. In Peter's second letter, he tells his readers that they should pay attention to the wisdom given their beloved brother Paul about the patience of the Lord that leads to salvation (see 3:15). He admits that he had to learn from the apostle Paul why God puts up with our sin for so long. He submitted to Paul, and he tells his own readers that they ought to pay attention to what Paul has to say on this particular issue.

The second question, in the middle of verse 13 asks: "Paul was not crucified for you, was he?" Paul did begin the letter by establishing his authority as an apostle, but he wanted no part of a faction that was named for him. He had never been crucified for anyone. Only one person died a death that brings salvation to men. A single cross argues for unity and against exalting particular leaders. And all of us believers have this in common whether we're leaders or followers: Our salvation is totally dependent on the cross of Jesus Christ, who is the only one who can deliver us. No human leader, no matter how gifted or effective, should have the loyalty that belongs only to the Lord.

Perhaps you need to re-examine your own loyalties. There may be a leader you've allowed to rival the Lord Jesus in your life. You listen to them more than you listen to him, and you're trusting their wisdom and counsel more than you trust him.

The third question has to do with the issue of baptism, of spiritual symbols: "Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other." Keep in mind that baptism was an important matter in the New Testament church. When sinners trusted Christ as their Savior and were baptized, it symbolized that they were being cut off from their old life. They often paid a great price. They would be rejected by their families. That still happens today in many countries in the world where non-Christian religions dominate. Baptism symbolizes being placed into Christ, being identified with him in his death and resurrection. It's a powerful symbol, but it's still only a

symbol, not the spiritual reality. Jesus didn't baptize people, and Peter and Paul baptized very few. Most of the baptisms were done by their associates in ministry. Until the church grew at Corinth, Paul baptized a few people, but that wasn't his main ministry. He couldn't remember exactly whom he had baptized and whom he hadn't. The Corinthian Christians were making too much of who baptized them. Paul puts it in proper perspective: "How could you think of showing a loyalty to me that belongs only to Jesus Christ?"

For us, it's wrong to identify any person's name with our baptism other than the name of Jesus Christ. To do so is to create division. I've read about people who had to be baptized by a certain pastor, using special water, usually from the Jordan River, on a special day, as though those were the matters that were important. Instead of honoring the Lord Jesus Christ and the miracle of regeneration, instead of promoting unity in the church, these people exalt other people and create disunity.

Paul knew that division can destroy a church. About five years after I came to PBC, I candidated at a church in the northwest, a very attractive church that I was drawn to. My brother was an elder there, and I had gone to college with a number of people who were part of the congregation. I had preached for them, and I knew a lot of the folks.

But as I got more of the history of the church, which was about ten or twelve years old, it became clear that from the very beginning it was a church based on schism. It had grown out of the Jesus movement. A number of people who had been disgruntled with their own churches were going to start the perfect church, a church that was true to the New Testament. Two young pastors left their churches to help plant this church. Within a year and a half, those two pastors, each with his own group of followers, had split the church and gone separate ways. The church had always been man-centered, relying on charismatic, powerful leaders to define and direct them.

When I candidated there, the pastor had left and there was a huge vacuum. I realized over the course of the weekend that they weren't submitted to Jesus as their head, and they weren't submitted to his expressing himself through the Scriptures as the authority over who the church is and how the church ought to function. They were looking for another man to save them. I have to confess that fourteen years ago I thought I was the man. The bottom line was that they didn't want me, but in reality God saved my bacon. Over the next six or eight years, the church unraveled, and it doesn't even exist anymore. They never understood that Jesus Christ was the central unifying figure in their life. It was very sad for me, because I loved a lot of those people. I watched my brother and his family suffer tremendously at the disintegration of that schismatic congregation.

### **The message of the cross restores unity**

Verse 17 ends our passage, focusing on the cure for division in the church. There are two things Paul says he will not do, and there are two positive things that he embraces. "For Christ did not send me to baptize [negative], but to preach the gospel [positive], not in cleverness of speech [negative], that the cross of Christ should not be made void [positive]." Again Paul summarizes the fact that baptism, this outward ritual signifying repentance from sin and initiation into Christian community, must take a back seat to the ministry of proclamation and the response of conversion. The spiritual reality is of primary importance. That's why Paul didn't bother to keep track of whom or how many he had baptized. Baptismal records, forms of communion, styles of music and worship, architecture, and other physical things that we try to hang onto don't sustain unity. What sustains unity is lives transformed by the work of the Spirit.

Paul says that he would not use eloquent speech, clever words of human wisdom—the Greek word *sophia*. A classical Greek lexicon defines *sophia* this way: "The skillful use of human reason with a view to convincing the hearer of the truth of a position." Paul says he wouldn't do that. He wouldn't rely on homiletics (sermonic style) or flash. That was not part of his commission. That kind of preaching, he says, will literally drain the power away from the message. People will get so focused on the messenger and his abilities that they will lose sight of the message.

When I was in seminary I had a good friend named Si who was a professional keyboard player, arranger, and composer. He played piano in the Christian band, Messenger. They recorded two albums that got national air play, and they toured for a couple of years. They were a fusion band, combining jazz, rock, and funk. They

were very innovative and creative, and their songs had great evangelistic lyrics. During that same time he also accompanied a young singer named Debbie McClendin. One time Si said to me poignantly, "Whenever Messenger plays, people come up after the concert and talk about how incredible the music is and how hot we are as a band. Whenever Debbie sings, people come up afterward and talk about Jesus." That was because in her singing the message had a simplicity and clarity that was not obscured by cleverness, to use Paul's word.

There are two things that will bring freedom from division. First, Paul was convinced that Christ had sent him to preach the gospel and nothing else. Substance was what he was committed to, not style. He remembered being confronted by the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, and in Acts he told King Agrippa about the call and what the message was to be. Jesus said to Paul, "But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (26:16-18.) He declared the gospel simply. He didn't want to destroy its inherent power by trusting anything else.

Second, the faithful preaching of the cross of Christ results in people's ceasing to put their trust in any kind of human device, rhetorical or otherwise, and learning to rely on God's work in Christ. Remember, in 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul was concerned that the divisions among them be made complete, or healed. Listen to the words of the apostle Peter as he talks about the healing ministry of the cross of Christ: "...[Jesus] Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed [made complete]. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls." (1 Peter 2:25.) If you're wandering off giving your loyalty to undershepherds, you aren't really giving your loyalty to Jesus Christ, the chief Shepherd. The healing power of the cross of Christ cuts across all human value systems and petty distinctions. The humiliation of Jesus Christ on the cross contradicts any attempt to exalt human leaders. We should stand humbled before the eternal work of the cross, convicted of our arrogance, our rivalry, and the distinctions that we try to promote between men.

There is a wonderful story of the power of the cross at work through a simple man. Dwight Moody was a shoe salesman in Chicago, Illinois in the middle part of the nineteenth century. He was converted to Christ. He had no formal schooling, and he used horrible grammar his whole life, but he shared the gospel with a passion. God turned him into the most powerful evangelist in America in the nineteenth century. Because of his effectiveness he was invited to preach in other countries. The first time he was asked to preach at Oxford University, the British press had a field day with this unlettered, simple man. He was also physically unattractive, having a huge pot belly, and the press savaged him on his physical appearance. So when he was introduced to hundreds of students at Oxford University, there was a lot of snickering and noise. He walked back and forth across the stage a couple of times, looking at these men, until it got quiet. These were his opening words: "Don't you believe, young gentlemen, that God don't love you, because he do." Then he repeated his words. There was a hearing for the gospel of Christ and a revival at Oxford University because of the simple preaching of a man who believed, as the apostle Paul did, that we must glory in the cross of Christ and the message of Christ, and quit looking at the messengers.

I know the teachers and preachers, the leaders in women's ministries and youth ministries here at PBC. What they care about more than anything is not that we think that they are so terrific in their leadership, but that lives are changed, people are drawn into deeper, more loving relationship with Christ. That's what unity is about.

In conclusion, listen to what John Stott says about the power of the cross and apply it to your own life:

*"There is wonderful power in the cross of Christ. It has power to wake the dullest conscience and melt the hardest heart; to cleanse the unclean; to reconcile him who is afar off and restore him to fellowship with God; to redeem the prisoner from his bondage and lift the pauper from the dunghill; to break down the barriers which divide men from one another; to transform our wayward characters into the image of Christ; and finally make us fit to stand in white robes before the throne of God."*

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Catalog No. 4509  
1 Corinthians 1:10-17  
Second Message  
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February 23, 1997

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