

Sectarianism and the Hard Work of Unity

by Dean Taylor

This sermon focuses on the importance of unity within the body of Christ, addressing the issue of sectarianism and the hard work required to achieve true unity. The passage from 1 Corinthians 1:10-14 highlights Paul's plea for believers to speak the same thing, avoid divisions, and be perfectly joined together in mind and judgment. The sermon emphasizes the need for repairing relationships, mending divisions, and working together as a community to achieve the unity that God desires.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10, Galatians 5:19, John 17:20, Psalms 133:1

Topics: "Unity in the Body of Christ", "Overcoming Divisions"

Description

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Transcript

The message that I'd like to call this particular one is on 1 Corinthians 1 10-14, and it's on sectarianism and the hard work of unity. And that's really the whole thing that I'd like to focus on here today. Let's look at these scriptures and then I'll open us up with prayer.

1 Corinthians 1 10 says, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division 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 Ployshauso, that there are contentions among you. Now, I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I'm of Apollos, or I'm of Cephas, or I'm 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, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus. 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 words of wisdom, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none, of no effect.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for these very challenging words, and we pray that by your Holy Spirit, you would make these come alive to us today, and speak to us, Lord, as we try to manifest what you want for unity in the body of Christ. We ask this, Lord, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Okay, so looking at this, I'm going to go to the second section first, because I think he gave us the cure at the beginning, and then he gave us the details underneath that. And so I'd like to focus on this.

So for it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now, I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, or I'm of Apollos, or I'm of Cephas, or I'm of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized in the name of Paul? It's interesting, when you start reading Corinthians, and you come to this, there definitely is a tone change.

The niceties at the beginning are suddenly gone, and he begins to get very serious about what he considers to be a very serious problem that's going on in Corinth. As we've seen this, we see through church history, we see the letter of Clement on Corinth, that a divisive attitude was in Corinth for centuries, maybe, at least a century. And so we can learn something from this.

The other thing is, I've shown on the other messages, that these guys were a diverse group. They brought together different cultures. We know for sure that you had an entire Jewish culture that was worshiping at the synagogue, and also the Gentiles that are there, and they're trying to bring this together.

You have the rich and the poor that are there, and you're trying to bring this together, and all those coming together is a radical church. And so why I relate so much to the church of Corinth is because of these elements, and I think that there's something that God wants his church to learn from this, and he also wants the church to look like this. This is a model for us.

Now, so let's look at some of these things, and particularly let's hone in on denominationalism. So denominationalism, we know we can really ponder this concept. I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos.

I am of Cephas. You know, radicals, if there's one thing that I've seen common from all of our different settings that I've been a part of within radical Christianity, and that is the big concerns over the division in the body and denominationalism in general, and that's for good reason. It's rightly so.

We tend to be, from everything from Anabaptist to kingdom to different kind of radicals, from church, international church of Christ for sure, is restoration, not just reformation. So what we mean by that is we're not just talking about tweaking a few things that are right or wrong or whatever, but we're talking about going back to the word of God. We're talking about going to early Christianity.

So we want a restoration of early Christianity, and not just a tweaking of a few things. We think that in Constantine and a lot of different things that happen in the church, there's been a big problem, and that we need to go back to early Christianity. So that's something that's big in us, and it's for good reason.

It's a challenge that we have to the church at large, and it's something that I think we need to continue to challenge. The division of the body of Christ is serious, as I'm going to show some different passages on that. But here's a part of it that as I bring it to us as radicals that I really want us to ponder.

Paul also said, or I am of Christ in that list. And so the interesting thing, and I just think this is so important, and it's so easy to miss, that in our zeal, in our radical desire to point the finger at the different things that

has happened in the church, and all the division, and the denominationalism, we can ourselves actually be very factious. And this is what I think Paul is getting at.

It's the factious spirit more than the name. I think, I don't know, it's maybe not as common. When I was just 20 years ago, 25 years ago, it was really common, and the non-denominational movement and things, and people would love to say, people say, oh, what kind of church do you go to? What denominations? Oh, I'm just a Christian.

And that would be very common, and there's a lot of good in that. The problem is that when that's married to some radical teachings and radical ideas and a sort of a sectarian spirit, it can come off very divisive, and that within the radical world, and I use that very broadly, so certainly all the Kingdom Anabaptist International Church of Christ, you know, groups like that that are not the norm, there can be this tendency of a factious spirit that we must be careful for. I've got a prompt to remember this story.

One time I remember I was preaching up in Buffalo Valley in Pennsylvania, and I was there, and there was this group there from a holiness circle, and it was funny, they were young men, they were wearing these plaincoats, and so I just thought they were like beachy Amish or something like that, and I began to talk to them, because I was preaching on non-resistance, and I found out that this holiness group actually believes in non-resistance and everything. I thought, oh, that's good, I really want to hear about this. So I was going through the line, you know, getting our food at the end of my sermon, and we were sitting down at the table, I said, I really want to hear, so you're a Wesleyan holiness church that's non-resistant? I said, tell me about it, what are some of the distinctives? And what's interesting is right across the table from me was a brother in our church that had come from them, and so he was sitting right across there, and so he knew, and he was kind of smiling, and I thought his grin was sort of interesting, but I said, so tell me about it.

He said, well, there's one thing about us that's very important. He said, we're non-denominational, and I said, oh, well, so are we, I mean, right, I mean, we're non-denominational too, and then the brother from the other side said, he means it differently than you do, and I said, well, what do you mean, like, so what do you mean he means it differently, how do you mean it differently than me? He said, he means it, we are the church, and you're not, and I said, oh, that is a little different, is that true? And he goes on to explain that, yeah, the way they deal with the whole division in the body of Christ is just simply to say, we're the only true Christians on earth, and I think this is where Paul is getting in on this concept, or I am of Christ, and it's amazing, all the one-true churchers out there that have this concept, and I don't think it's getting at what Paul is wanting us to hear in this, is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, is this little group that you're in, this little party, the guys that baptized you, or were you baptized in the name of Paul, you know, it's not your little group, there's something bigger, and there's an attitude there that the Holy Spirit is wanting to speak to us through the words of Paul. Now, as I look up a few words in this, I've got some really exciting stuff to share about some of these words, and the words for divisions is a very common one that we have even in English, is where we get our words, for schism, for schism, for the schismata, the idea of there being a split, and it's serious, when you look this up in the Greek, it's the idea of something being ripped, you know, like the temple veil here, it's tearing, to split or to tear, and that's the kind of spirit that we see this warning that these people are having in the church right there in Corinth, and it's very serious, Paul brings it up very serious, and it happens in other scriptures too, you know, the Bible speaks of this spirit as one of the works of the flesh, when we have this kind of factious attitude, it says here in Galatians 5, 19-21, when it mentions the works of the flesh before the fruits of the spirit, it says, now the works of the flesh are manifest, in other words, you could just see it, no theological thing, it's manifest,

which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, now watch the list now, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, that means to divide, make your own group, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings, and such like, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, it's not a small thing, and that if we have within us this spirit of this factious divisive spirit in our radical world, it's serious, because John gives us Jesus' prayer as powerful, he says here in John 17, verse 20, I do not, this is Jesus speaking before he goes to the crucifixion, he says, I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, this is us he's speaking of, that they all may be one, as you father are in me, and I in you, that they all may be one in us, notice in him, that the world may believe that you sent me, so Jesus is faking his testimony on this quality of unity, and I love this passage, this section here, and the glory which you gave me, I have given them, I'll come back to that with the Shekinah glory of the old covenant, that they may be one, just as we are one, I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that you sent me, and have loved them as you loved me, I look at that glory passage that he gives the church, I don't know, I see a connection here with this passage in Psalm 133, behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, it is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron running down over the edges of his garments, it is like the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion, and watch this, for there, in that spirit of unity, the Lord commanded the blessing, life evermore, now I believe that the, while this has a global sense to it, in particular Paul through the Holy Spirit, is talking about the local body, and the kind of thing that we represent as the body in this unity, and that this takes work, and that's the message that I'm trying to show here, that having this beautiful thing that Jesus is talking about, is something that takes a lot of work, and he gives us the power to do that, so here's a very striking passage from the early church, it's one that talks about division, and it's a startling passage from Irenaeus, writing around the year 150, he was a bishop in the church in Lyons, that's France, and he was writing against the Gnostics, the Gnostics would kind of gather together little people, and make these little factious groups and things, and say they're the ones who are the Gnosis, they're the ones who know, and the rest of them don't, and he's looking at this sort of factious attitude in the Gnostics, and he says this, he said, he shall also judge those who give rise to schism, who are destitute of the love of God, and who look to their own special advantage, rather than to the unity of the church, and who for trifling reasons, or any kind of reason which occurred to them, cut in pieces, and divide the great and glorious body of Christ, and so far as in them lies positively destroy it, men who parade of peace while they give rise to war, and do in truth strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel, now listen to this next passage, and think of it, this is written in year 150, and all that happened from then on, for no reformation of so great importance can be effected by them, as will compensate for the mischief arising from their schism, he shall also judge all those who are beyond the pale of the truth, that is who are outside the church, but he himself shall be judged by no one, as we look at this concept, and of the unity of the church they had in the early Christians, it makes us ponder of the seriousness of the attitude, but how do we define this oneness that Irenaeus spoke of, he goes on to talk about that they were given a complete body of knowledge, a complete doctrine, the faith was once for all delivered to the saints, he was saying in those days that you should go to the churches, that you could literally trace your line back to the apostles, because this gnostic stuff is not happening, but the unity that he was wanting to see there was not a unity that that didn't matter about truth, or that the church could then make up truth later, so that the deposit of the apostolic truth was very important to Irenaeus in describing this, that this this idea of the church, and so as I think of this little picture I drew up this morning, or I put together, you know, you look at what is the emphasis then of this first Corinthians passage, and I look at this flock of birds, and you know when you look at this flock of birds, sometimes

aren't they just amazing, I mean they spin around and turn around, there's some YouTube videos here that you can see that it's literally like one person, but if you hone in on one bird, you can see that there's this individual bird with all the components that this bird has, but it's part of something bigger, and I, and while I'm very strong about us not having a factious attitude for the rest of the body of Christ, the place of that bird, and how God wants us to focus on what, how we can experience unity as a body, I think this was the heart of what Paul is saying.

By any definition, if we're trying to look at Jesus' words, and this command to unity, by any definition there is, there is some division, I mean you could be Greco-Orthodox Catholics, you can be all different, Protestant, Catholic, and all these different things, if we, if we think that the absolute oneness that Jesus is commanding us to have is some sort of hierarchy of an entire, and of entire nation, then I think we're off, it doesn't exist, no matter what side of the camp you get on, but, but being in that, I've, I've, I've said in my, my little episodic quadrilateral that I look at scripture first, a scripture that's crystal centric, that we put Christ interprets all of the scripture, that I look to antiquity, to how the scriptures were interpreted to the early church, but then I look at the church, the reality of that faith expression throughout all time, and with that, I ponder, and I try to stand in both seriousness of the faith, once for all, delivered to the saints, but I also try to stand with humility of those who, who are, who are in, in the other, in other places, and so I look at, first of all, we're looking at a broad sense, and I'm going to hone in on, I think, where the attention of where Paul is, just the local church there, Corinth, but first of all, where this can get to us in the radical circles is this factious spirit that we can have about others. I got a, a mean here, the golden mean, okay, so it works like this, you know, that on each side, you can take a doctrine, and, and you can say there's sin on either side, so the different sides of the, the sin thing that I'm going to go to here is being factious on one end, and being into apostasy, basically worldliness, is giving up the faith, giving up the, the early church is on the other, and it's our responsibility to try not to fall into either side of that. We have to realize that we can be factious, and, and, and, and in all ages, through all the centuries, I can almost assure you that the vast majority of them did not think that they were being factious.

They were the ones telling the perfect truth, but we just have to realize that that can go towards faction. On the other hand, there's been thousands and millions of people who are, who are thinking they're just being open-minded, and being not factious, we're falling into apostasy, and sin, and worldliness, and we see Christ, Jesus crying out on these things, and the Apostle Paul, and everything, so looking at this, and looking at the severity, the seriousness of faction, we have to just consider these, these poles, and how they, they go to, they can go to either side, and I think it's, it's, it's for us to think about, to keep in mind as we consider the weight of faction. I, I thought, I pondered, I said, what drives my definition, my definition lines of unity, and here's me, and I'll explain a little bit of my personality, and how there's different personalities in the church for a reason, but here's me.

I think it's like this. We should be unified with the body of Christ, the larger body of Christ, unless I can't, unless we can't. Instead of, we are unified only when it is an accident, so what I mean by that is, okay, the Ninth Street Evangelical Church in town is, they pray, they happen to pray, and they happen to meet on Sunday, they happen to, I don't know, you know, they have a donuts and coffee, and we have donuts and coffee.

What a coincidence. It's only an accident, but there's, it's, in other words, I believe it's something more to that. When I ponder my apostolic quadrilateral, that I want to try, to purposely try to where I can to be unified, and I believe that this would do justice to Jesus's words in his prayer, that we should be one.

If his prayer is one, and he stakes his testimony on this, then I think that we should try where we can to have that oneness, instead of just purposely trying to be, to be different. Now, I'll, in saying that, I want to explain a little bit of my personality. Through my years of radical church life, I've come to think that there's two types of leadership, or two types of leader type people in the body of Christ.

There's Paul's, and there are Barnabas's, and I'm a Barnabas, and so Paul's are the guys that are the prophetics, and so they are the ones that call out things, and say, this is wrong, and this is, you can't do this, and this is sin in the church, and, and we have those people in the church for a reason, and if we, and the other, on the other hand, though, we have our Barnabas, and our Barnabas's are the guys that, like, for instance, introduced Paul. If it wasn't for Barnabas, I don't know if Paul would have got a hearing, that he's the one that, that, you know, would say, hey, give Paul a chance. You gotta understand, he's converted, and, and there's some powerful stuff with him, so that is a difference there, but the, but each of them have their, their problems, and the prophetic spirit, if you have just this type, and you just have the Apostle Paul's, and you don't have the Barnabas types, then it can get sort of, I don't know, it can get sort of, I don't know, it can get sort of strict, or maybe, I know that strict is the right word, but it can get factious, if that's all it is.

On the other hand, the way I would see things in my cry for unity, it can get worldly, and I realize that this passage here that you see, that Paul is rebuking, that's Paul, rebuking, this is when Peter did not want to eat with the Gentiles, and he, like, rebukes him to his face over this, and he mentions here in Galatians 2.13, and the other Jews dissemble likewise with them, inasmuch that Barnabas also was carried away with this dissimulation, and so we see that in this personality, it can too easily go to this unity, so I recognize that, and I recognize that I need my prophetic brothers to call me, and to call us in this balance as the church, so I want to recognize that, so keep that in mind when you hear my words, but my burden after 30 years is that we must be careful, we must be careful in, in how we look at these scriptures, and the end of the day, I base my ecumenism on Jesus Christ. I'm one with those that look like Jesus, and I want to be like Jesus, and so why I'm attracted to churches that take the words of Jesus seriously, why I have non-negotiables that I could not fellowship with a church that would be compromising on the Sermon on the Mount, on things that His teachings, and all of the scriptures, but in the end of the day, if we're having to explain away teachings of Jesus, I think there's an apostasy there that I, I cannot go along with, and so to clarify my sense of ecumenism that I've given to you today, Jesus is the non-compromising part of that, of that unity. It's Jesus, a verse that I sort of try to live by.

I have it written in my office. It's one of my favorite passages. If you recall, I said Mark 9 in the passage, the context is the, the disciples are running up, and they're seeing that there's other people that were casting out demons without them, and so they run to Jesus, and they say, Jesus, stop these guys.

They're, they're casting out demons without us, and which is crazy if you think about this, that, so what they're saying is that they would prefer people to be demon possessed rather than not do it their way, and that's the kind of thing that I think that we have to watch out as radicals. These disciples were radicals. They wanted to be followers of Jesus, and Jesus, at the end of this, He gives a dialogue there, and He comes down at the end of the chapter, and I interpret it.

I'll tell you how I interpret it this way. He says, salt is good, but as salt has lost its saltiness, wherewith shall it be seasoned? He said, you got to be salty. If you're just compromising, if you're not real, what good are you? As we see in the Sermon on the Mount, you're good for nothing to be trampled underfoot of men, but then He says, have salt within yourself.

Yes, be that way, and have peace with one another. Wow, do I think that's the perfect balance, that we as a local church, we as a people will be completely salty. We won't just be compromising, but at the end of the day, we're going to have peace with one another.

If He would have just said, have peace with one another, then it's sort of the sloppy ecumenism, this sort of nothing matters, this sort of evangelistic kind of stuff. If He would have just said, be salty, then we end up kind of pharisaical, sort of ugly. Jesus says, have salt within yourself, and peace with one another.

I love that balance. It's one of my passages I try to live by. So what are we pointing people to? Where does our attention go then? Can we cure worldwide ecumenism? How shall we apply this word? Should we point the bird to the flock, or shall we look at this fellowship right here and right now? Where should we put the point of the unity of the body of Christ? And I think this is where also we can mention, we can oftentimes miss it, and our desire to be some international world movement or something, we can end up divided in our own local body and have contention and strife even locally in our midst of radicals.

What I find impressive is that the way Paul speaks to them that they are the body of Christ and members individually. We're not going to get into the whole there of Corinthians 12 yet, but he mentions you're a unit of yourself. We are intended to be functioning, to have those gifts, to have those things that complete us.

In the book of Revelation I have here, it's to the church at Sardis, to the church at Laodicea, that yes, there is a worldwide church, and we should work for unity and all that, and those types of things, but we can get distracted in that and be divisive even here locally. And so I think that the weight of Paul is, guys, in Corinth, you're the body of Christ. You're supposed to be working this out.

You're supposed to be manifest. You're supposed to be showing people in Corinth. You're supposed to be showing people that come around that you are the body of Christ.

You've got these different members, these different things, these different qualities. Work this out, guys. This is what I see Paul saying to us.

And it comes through in different ways through different times. It's interesting. I'm going to give you just a couple of times of unity.

I remember a lot of times people say, well, you know, persecution is the time that really will unify us. I was in a discussion once. I remember I was with this very conservative brother from a very conservative Mennonite group, and he liked my book, and he was coming over for dinner, and we were talking, and I was like, hey, is there a time that maybe we could get together and like, you know, you tell us where you think that we're going off, and, you know, maybe we could share things that we think that you're missing.

And not that we walk away agreeing on some thing, but is there a way that we can just strengthen one another as solid brothers challenging solid brothers? And this is the way I would interpret that concept of unity. Not overall everybody, you know, under the same conference or something, but that strength is challenging the others. And I'll never forget, he said, well, maybe that's what persecution does.

In other words, during persecution, that's when we can unify. I was talking to one of my Mennonite friends, and I said, hey, is that Mennonite language for over my dead body? He laughed and said, yeah, I think it is. And this is something, is that we can't keep just putting it off.

It's something. And I did a study. My mind started spinning, and I started thinking of things.

I went to the early splits in Holland. They were some of the worst. The Dutch started splitting way up early in the early Anabaptists.

In the 1500s, they were already splitting. We had these different splits, and I wrote them down here. And then I looked at those, and I said, huh, all these church splits, let's look at when those martyrs were happening.

And I matched them up. And I found that during each of these times of great persecution, some of the most famous in the martyr's mirror, there was church splits. Now, I got two lessons from that.

Number one, stop saying that persecution will heal your church problems. But number two, it's no excuse to give up on the faith. Young people, let me tell you, if you've been born into a family that's in radical Christianity, you're going to see some tough stuff.

I'm going to tell you. You're going to see some tough stuff. My children have seen some tough stuff.

But look at these examples here. Look at them. Look at that.

These are some of the most incredible examples that we have here, including Dirk. They're happening at the same year that these major divisions are happening, that they had their eyes on Christ. Even in the midst of this, they kept going.

Those are the two lessons I got from that. It's amazing. Now, sectarianism is a sin.

It's a serious sin. I think that's what we hear by this portion of that scripture. So, I'll close this section with reading that again, and ponder it with those thoughts.

For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of close household, that there are contentions among you. Now, I say this to each of you. I'm a Paul, or I'm a Paulist, or I'm a Seapist, or I'm of Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Christ? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. And he ends with this. Is this a serious? Lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

This attitude, this attitude is serious amongst the radicals. Divisive in the house, and divisive of how we think of other people. Both ways.

Both ways. We need to listen hard to these passages. But now, I love this section.

There's a couple Greek words here that I, Greek words here that I looked up that just really, this is the work of how we do this. So, the cure that I see in Paul's words here, right at the beginning. Now, I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing.

And if there be no divisions among you, and that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. Wow, that's pretty high calling. You know, if we look at, we love here in Medford, Brother Finney really brings us the inductive method of Bible reading.

And I, as I pondered this passage, I just sat back and I said, okay, Lord, how do I do this? Now, I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you speak the same thing. That there be no

division, and that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. I mean, I've been around a lot of churches that have had a lot of talk about a lot of unity in my radical 30 years.

That is a pretty high calling. What he's calling us to here, and what he, this is how he wants us to express at the local body, this kind of impressive unity. I dove in a little bit to these words, and I got really excited with them.

Of course, the idea of divisions we've talked about is just this concept of being schismatic, and the division, and all this. But there's another word that really got me excited, and not about the division part, and it's the part about coming together and thinking one top, having the same mind, and the same judgment. Now, let me move my little, the way I've seen this expressed in my 30 years has been pretty remarkable.

I mean, some of you who've never been around Lancaster County, or some of the places that really put a lot of emphasis on being perfect in the way you think, and the way you judgment, it comes off in some pretty remarkable ways. The experience of radicals that I have found, and kind of understandably, is a reaction to the applications of some of these radical Anabaptist unity. It happens.

It comes out of us. We look at this like this. This is like a Horning Mennonite church in Lancaster County, I assume, and as we see this, you know, we're like, come on.

I mean, when I visited a Horning church years ago, I felt kind of conspicuous driving up with my white van, you know? But the idea that here is that now let's ponder, though, Paul's words, and try to get the kind of just crazy unity that we kind of see in different people. Now, we see this express different peoples and from different peoples, and it's not just a Mennonite world, and so this idea of being of the same mind and the same judgment, and to be perfectly joined together, you know, it's funny in the radical world, particularly from my experience coming out of sort of a very conservative Anabaptist settings, that I've been like at the charity movement that's in Lancaster County with all the different Mennonites and Amish around them, the Hutterites in Minnesota who are the same way coming out of an older setting, and so as we ponder, a lot of times when we start thinking of what Paul is saying there, our mind immediately go to this kind of uniformity, this kind of exact uniformity, and our discussions surround it. We talk a lot about it, and our frame of reference is almost knee-jerk of, I don't want this.

Now, it's funny if it's like this, it somehow seems kind of culturally chic, but if it looks like that, it somehow looks really wrong to us, and it's because a lot of it comes from some personal baggage and some reactionism that comes with that, but again, I'm going to set this up, and then I'm going to get to some cool things that I think Paul is actually really saying, so that's kind of been from my experience, and so I pondered this, and I just kind of asked the question, as I looked at the scripture and tried to have the sort of inductive Bible reading that we do here at Medford, and so as I look at this, and I look at the way like particularly some of the very conservative Mennonite groups do, what drove this application of unity, and what do they have that we do not? Those are some honest questions. I'm going to ask the first one first. When I have studied, and I pondered what drove, what drove in the 1900s, in the earlier times, what drove Anabaptist uniform, particularly from my background, from my 30 years, particularly in the Anabaptists, what drove that, and if there's anything that I've really noticed in the 1900s, it's this.

It's actually the Salvation Army, and I've heard some people say that a lot of the uniformity comes from looking at the Quakers. I find absolutely no evidence of that looking at the research. I find, and I'm very convinced of this, that the concept that came into the 1900s, that the uniformity and the unity was more of

a militant purposefulness of radical evangelism and identification.

When you read from the Garden City Confession of the, in 19, was it 21 or 23, I forgot, and Daniel Kaufman speaking there, he doesn't talk about the Quakers or something. He talks about the Salvation Army. He says, guys, we got to be like them.

They are on purpose. They are driven. They are evangelizing the world.

Let's be like this, and that's what I see that happened, that through this, you see a people that became like, yeah, that's what we do, and if you remember, this is the 1920s. Lots of different cultures. It wasn't just a Mennonite thing.

It was happening certainly in Germany with Nazis. It was happening all over America with fundamentalism. It was happening to the Baptists, to the different conservative groups were very much getting into this.

This is a group in, I think, Canada, the Temperance League that was there, purposeful, driven, a community, one that they were doing in particular, and somehow you went from this. This is 1890. This is the group of John Funk working at what became the Herald Truth Magazine and what became the Scotdale, the Bastion of Orthodoxy, the Scotdale Press, which eventually became Herald Press later on, but here you had a lot more diversity, but what came is that this drive for radical unity in a militant way drove them to some sort of uniform standards that are even what you won't even see in these very conservative ones in the 1890s.

Here it becomes a little later. This is the early Eastern Mennonite college picture of what they were trying to accomplish. Now, what do they have that radicals often miss, and where does it break down? This is the question that I ask in my journey, and if I can sit down with coffee with my radical brothers and ponder this question honestly.

When I was at Charity, and we were a very, very on-purpose group. We still are. They still are.

Charity is a very on-purpose group. It's situated right in the middle of Lancaster County, which is filled with a lot of different, very conservative groups, and one thing I noticed as I compared our sense of cohesiveness, of unity, of peoplehood versus, let's say, the Joe Wangers, or this is the horse and buggy Mennonites, or the, you know, something like that. I was like, well, somehow they're having somewhat of a cohesiveness that we don't have, and I pondered it because we were really going, I mean, there was one group like, for instance, the Joe Wangers in Lancaster County.

You have horse and buggy Mennonites. They would literally go to church just twice a month. No homeschooling, no special things, no Bible schools, no nothing.

Twice a month they're meeting, and I'm looking and somehow their sense of cohesiveness is more than we have. What is it, and where does this break down, though? And as I pondered something, oops, oh no, I had to go back. Oh, there we go.

As I pondered something about it, is that what can start as very purposeful, it loses its purpose, and then it no longer has the driving spirit that it was meant to. As I pondered this idea here, look at this ring of people. These communities, when they become so tight and are choosing things to unify them, that they become so tight, where it breaks down is that it's become difficult for others to get in, and there's somehow

this balance between this in our small, radical groups that we must have this complete working together in both the way we think and the way we apply ourselves, but it can't be so tight like this that there's just no place for evangelism, because that's what Jesus wants us to be, and I realized that, you know, we've got to be careful as radicals, because the prisoner and the patriot both wear uniforms, but for very different reasons, for very different reasons, and if our unity becomes a sense of coercion, a sense of control, a sense of, I don't know, if it becomes like that, then it's kind of missed the purpose of why it's there, but when the uniforms of the soldiers get put in or the patriots get put on, they're trying to do something in purpose, so the cohesiveness, the purpose is driven, the unity is driven with a purpose, and I see this is where Paul is closer to what we're wanting to do.

If I stick a wall in the ocean, I ain't gonna get very many fish. That's why the Bible uses nets to gather. That's why the people uses nets and not walls.

If I have walls up, I'll keep all those fish in that are within that wall, but you ain't gonna get other fish coming in, and so as I look at that inside that wall, it'd be like, oh, you guys have got it together, but there has to be some balance in there, and that's what I'm striving, and with unity and with charity of trying to understand the balance of what Paul is talking about in this radical thing. Somehow, there's got to be somewhere that's unified on purpose, driven, but enough to pull in a whole harvest of fish like this, a whole harvest of fish, and so let's look at this word. I love this word, this word that we use, be perfectly joined together.

That's a big word. It makes you think of ponder all these different approaches that I've seen in my 30 years, and now say, okay, God, well, then how do you want us to do it? How do we do it in the 21st century from people that are coming from all different backgrounds, evangelical, Church of Christ, Mennonites, and former Catholics, and people off the street? How do we be perfectly joined together? What can you tell us in that? Now, I plead with you, brother, and by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you, but that you'd be perfectly joined together in the same mind, in the same judgment. When I looked at Chrysostom's commentary to see what he said about this, he said, there's a fact is we have different levels of unity.

We can have a confessional unity where we speak just the same thing, and this is where we have just creedal churches, and we have a creed, and we agree on a creed, but he wants us to go beyond that. Paul is wanting us to have a unity that goes beyond just lip service, but a life of unity. Now, what does that look like with all the different examples that we've compared? It comes in this pat, this word, and I love this word.

I love it. I love this word. Catardizo, to be perfectly joined together.

Now, when I pondered that word, and I said, okay, Lord, this is an inductive Bible study. What does that word teach me? Because perfectly joined together seems pretty perfect to me, but as I looked into this word and studied the Greek meaning of this, I got really excited because it's actually more of a verb than it is a noun. It's actually more of a working of a pondering of how you do church instead of a sign of what church looks like.

It's a direction and more of a description. It's how we accomplish this unity packed into this word, catardizo. Hope I'm saying it right to you Greek scholars out there.

It's an amazing word. I looked at this in the scriptures. The way it comes out is it has a lot of things that deal with the net and shipping.

Now, remember in my other passages, when you look at Greece, this is a modern day picture of it. Right through the center, when you go from the Athens area up to Corinth, ancient Corinth, just right over here, there's this canal. Now, even in those, that's only four miles to go across.

As I showed you in the other pictures that even today, you can see that. You can see from one end of Greece to the other at this spot, and it was a small area. In the time of the apostles, and in Corinth, remember that's where they had the shipping, and they had ships on there, and they put them on there, and they moved them across, and you had fishing things, and it was a fishing port, and all this.

One of the things that come out, one of the biggest meanings that come out of this word is mending of nets. I want you, brethren, to be like mending nets. The word is translated from the Greek where it means to render or to repair, to mend that which is broken.

Now, I took this picture when I was in Lesbos, and you walk around Lesbos. One of the things that really just struck me, the colors, the beautiful colors and everything, is at the end of the day, these guys are fishing all day long, but at the end of the day, they're pulling out these nets. They have to mend them, because if your net's messed up, you ain't catching any fish.

It's just a ponderment. It's a work and a labor that it's hard for us in America to consider. We'd like to just go to work and do something quick or whatever, and the idea of messing, just buy a new net for crying out loud.

I mean, get it ordered on Amazon. What are you doing like that? But the word picture that I get of what Paul is doing, it's like this little gathering here, and we're at Indonesia or something. Community gathers around and it fixes, it mends, it prepares, and that's work.

This is a picture of what the church is, and us getting together in a unity of coming together and working out the snags, and working out the holes, and working out those things that Paul is telling us to ponder in this way, and I just love that analogy. Now, I couldn't help, got one more application to this very word. I couldn't help but think, I've said, I just can't help but think there's, what about joinery? So, joinery is in the way that you woodworkers out there, Jeremy, I hope you're listening.

So, you know, it's really cool to me how people do joinery. I bought a dovetail thing to try to do with my boys. I never got around to doing it, but I'm really impressed by dovetail joinery, and how things fit perfectly.

So, when I was doing the inductive Bible reading of this passage, I was saying, perfectly joined together, I'm imagining like a dovetail joint, and so I went on a hunt, and I said, this is actually what I was originally looking for. I said, okay, I'm going to take this word in Greek, and I'm going to see, is there any way that the ancient Greeks used this word in reference to their joinery, how they joined wood together, and this is when it just started to explode, this concept of this working concept of it, and so I did to the Google Scholar, and I started to see the different way that this word was used, the concept here. So, here's my, as you can see here, you know, the, look at that, a joinery, perfectly joined together.

This is how I was imagining Paul's, you know, statement there to the church in Corinth, I want you to be like that, so the Japanese joinery there, that's how I want you to be, and as I pondered, when I started to

research, you know, the wood, the ship building that they had there in Corinth, and they would have been very involved with the building of brand new ships, and the repair of ships would both have been happening there, you know, in Corinth, that here's a model of an ancient ship that they're rebuilding there, and then I came on to this, I came on to this dissertation, a doctrinal dissertation, when I was searching this word in Google Scholars, and it was on the material and social cost of Roman warfare in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, sorry, and in this, they really drove out the way that Conertizo was used in the ancient way, and this really made me excited. You see here in this picture, there is a repair of a ship that's happening, and here's the amazing thing, the word is not used for building new ships or building new nets, the word means to repair, amend, fix. Look at this, and I'm going to give you this, so I, when I was studying this, this Greek historian, Polybius, and he was a Greek historian of the Hellenic period, and he wrote on the Polypanesian wars and that kind of a thing, and he left us some, some words, some histories of, of, of how they had these wars, and in particular, he had some ones on how they did the repair of the ships, and so when you're doing war, and you were doing battles, one of the things you've got to make sure that you do with the, is constantly repair this battleship, you know, and this is what got me excited.

So also in Corinth, this is from one of the columns, you can see that shipbuilding and was part of, of, of what they had, so it was very much in a part of it. Here's again a, a picture of a drawing of how they would just drag these ships over that area in Corinth, and all the repairs. Here's a modern day picture of some of those grooves that they did that, and then here's the passage, bear with me as I read you this, that I dug out of this doctrinal dissertation.

He says, fortunately, Polybius is fairly careful to make clear distinction between these two activities of building and refitting or repairing, although this distinction is sometimes lost in some translations. The process described in the most detail for the first Roman fleet of 260, and I'm almost done guys, so bear with me, this is awesome, where Polybius notes that the Romans undertook to build ships that do so with the Carthaginian model, then while the ships are being fitted out, the rowers are trained on land, so that the fleet could be launched as soon as the ships were entirely finished. When both activities, refitting and building, are happening at once, you're building new ships and you're repairing old ships, Polybius is careful to note this, as with the Carth-, Carthaginian fleet built in late 256.

Polybius notes that in the Carthaginian, both refitted old ships and built new ones from scratch throughout the first Punic war, but Polybius uses this word and its noun along with the rest of the technical forms only in ship building and never to refit or repair the existing ships. By contrast, and then here's our word, caratizo, by contrast this word is the most common word Polybius uses for ship repair or refitting, none of these words are used for the building of ships from scratch, and so what I think is amazing about that, what I think is amazing is that the image that Paul has, is that the church should be in this constant sense of being on battle, of going forth, but it's going to take work, it's going to take us sitting around as a community and working out those nets, it's going to take us, it's going to take us, taking the ship and repairing it, and that's a community work, that's not just something that you can lay out there and lay a clear wall up or a particular thing that we're going to say, this is what unity works like, that unity to be perfectly joined together is an action word, it's a process that he's calling the church to work out those hard things. Now let's hear it in this, from Corinthians and I'll close, now I plead with you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you speak the same thing, that there be no division among you, that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, we need more of this, maybe less of that, so this reflecting upon, it's my last slide, reflecting upon chertizo, unity looks like this, that's the image that I get in this passage in Corinth, a church that's on the move, a church that's wanting to bring, you

know, goods to the ends of the world, but it's going to take repairing of nets, repairing of the ship, and it's a work, and unity is not something we can just sit on, it's something that's going to take the Holy Spirit working within us, and to continue this, and to keep going, so let me hand it back over to you, and I pray that God can let us manifest that unity here in our church.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/V90s8HUAKIA.mp4>

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