

Is the Christ Divided?

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the importance of unity and the nature of the church, which is an organism, not an organization, and is made up of saints, not sinners.

Duration: 1:11:37

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:1

Topics: "Church Unity", "Discipline Process"

Description

In this sermon, Brother Stephen Kong focuses on the issue of division within the church, specifically addressing the problem that existed in the church at Corinth. He emphasizes the importance of unity and urges believers to be perfectly united in the same mind and opinion. Kong highlights the need for reconciliation and the process of discipline within the church when conflicts arise. He also emphasizes the significance of the name of the Lord Jesus and the message of the cross in overcoming division and boasting in the flesh.

Transcript

This is Sunday evening, August the 5th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. The ministry is being given through Brother Stephen Kong. Will you please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1? 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 1. I'm reading from the new translation, so it may be a little bit different from yours, but the substance is the same.

Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will, and Socrates, the brother, to the assembly of God which is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that in every place, call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 10.

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all say the same thing, and that there be not among you divisions, but that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion. For it has been shown to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of the house of Caloi, that there are strifes among you. But I speak of this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

Is the Christ divided? Has Paul been crucified for you? Or have you been baptized unto the name of Paul? Let us pray. Lord, we commit thy word into thy hands. We look to thee to bless it and to give it to us, that

we may be satisfied with thy word, with thyself.

O, how we praise and thank thee, because thou art very living, thou art very real. And we know that thou art here in our midst, as thou hast promised. Lord, we pray that thou would manifest thyself to us.

We pray that thou would remove every veil that may be upon our heart. O, as we turn to thee, Lord, we may see thy glory. We may be transformed from glory to glory, as by thy Spirit, Lord, the Spirit.

We ask in thy precious name. Amen. Of all the letters written by the Apostle Paul, there is none that is more diversified and practical than the first letter to the Corinthians.

It is so practical that it does not probably give us a very pleasant reading. I think most people would rather read the letter to the Ephesians. Because when you read the letter to the Ephesians, you feel as if you were uplifted to the third heaven.

You are living in the heavenlies. Everything is underneath your feet. And that gives us such a glorious time.

But when you read 1 Corinthians, it reminds you that you are still on earth. You are not only still on earth, but you may yet to be delivered from being fleshly, that is, from being carnal. And that is not very flattering.

But dear brothers and sisters, even so, this first letter to the Corinthians is most needed and necessary for us. There are lessons that we need to learn before God. And unless we learn these lessons, we will not be able to get into the reality of the letter to the Ephesians.

We may theorize, philosophize, spiritualize the letter to the Ephesians. But in reality, we are not in. We are not there.

To enter into Ephesians, we have to come through Corinthians. So I feel probably this time we will like to fellowship together a little bit on 1 Corinthians. Probably only the first few chapters.

Now tonight, I would like to fellowship with you dear brothers and sisters just on one thing. And that is, Paul says, he is the Christ divided. He is the Christ divided.

During Paul's second so-called missionary trip, he spent a year and a half in the city of Corinth. That city was a center of wealth and culture. But it was also a very wicked city.

He becomes part of the Greek language. To say that, to live like a Corinthian. To live like a Corinthian means to live an immoral, drunken life.

As in many big cities, as in many cultural centers, you find the depths of corruption. So there you find in the city of Corinth, it was highly sophisticated. And yet, it was deeply immoral.

But thank God, when the gospel of Jesus Christ reached that city, even the chiefs of sinners were saved. And the work of God was such that many were converted, both the Jews and the Gentiles. And during the 18 months that Paul was there, an assembly of God was raised up there as a light in darkness.

Then Paul left Corinth. And at his third missionary trip, he came to Ephesus. He stayed for three years there.

But during his stay in Ephesus, he learned something of the conditions of the assembly in Corinth. Now he learned this from various sources. So he wrote the first letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus.

It was only a few years after he left the city of Corinth, after he left behind him the assembly of God which was in Corinth. And yet, he got information concerning that church. Number one, he learned something of their situation in Corinth through the household of Calor.

You know, the name Calor actually is a woman's name. So probably this lady has a big household with many children and probably many slaves, many servants. And from the household of Calor, Paul learned something of the conditions of the assembly in Corinth.

But that was not the only source of information. Three brothers from Corinth came to visit Ephesus. As you find in the 16th chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Stephanus, Fortinus, and Atticus. Now these three brothers, they came from Corinth to Ephesus. And from them, Paul learned something more about the situation in the church there.

Furthermore, the assembly in Corinth wrote Paul a letter. And in that letter, they asked of Paul on various problems. They had some problems.

And they would like to seek some advice from Paul. Therefore, you'll find when Paul wrote the first letter to the Corinthians, sometimes he said, concerning this and concerning that. That is to say, which you have written to me and asked for my opinion.

So from these various sources, Paul gathered something about the actual spiritual conditions of the church there in Ephesus, in Corinth. And he was deeply burdened before God to write them a letter. I wonder, brothers and sisters, when you read the first letter to the Corinthians, I wonder if you wonder, why is it when the church at Corinth wrote a letter to Paul, asking his opinions or his advice on various problems, why is it that the questions they asked were all, what we would say, all, according to Paul, minor questions, if I may put it that way.

Well, that's not the right word. Not the basic questions. In other words, they asked Paul about marriage.

Now, marriage is an important question. That's true. They asked Paul about virginity, virgins.

They asked Paul about remarrying. They asked Paul about eating the things that were sacrificed to idols. They asked Paul about gifts, spiritual gifts.

Now, I would not say these are non-important things. I think that is wrong. But, among them, there were more basic and essential and important matters to be solved.

And yet, they asked nothing of these questions. There were divisions in their midst. There was immorality in their midst.

And yet, they did not ask Paul about these things. Instead, they asked Paul about other things. Now, isn't that human nature? These Corinthian believers, they were so proud of their intellect.

They were so proud of their spirituality or pseudo-spirituality that they could overlook the basic questions, the basic problems that existed in their midst. And yet, seemed to want to rationalize and theorize and argue about different things. I do not say the other things are not important.

But I do say that there are more important things that need to be settled unless these basic and more important problems are solved. All these other questions which are the superstructure, actually, can never be solved in a real way. Dear brothers and sisters, how often God's people are so proud of their knowledge, of their spirituality, that they can really be blind to the basic problems that exist.

And yet, seem to be very anxious to know many things, lots of things. And that was the condition in the church in Corinth. To Paul, as he knew God, the most basic problems that existed in the assembly at Corinth were twofold.

First, it was a spiritual problem. The division that was in their midst. And to Paul, this was a tremendous problem.

This was a problem that was at the root of the church. And then secondly, the moral question. There was immorality in their midst that even the Gentiles did not have.

They were worse than the Gentiles. And brothers went to court against brothers. And yet, the people in Corinth, the saints at Corinth, didn't seem to mind these two things.

They didn't even bother to ask Paul about these things. As if they were minor, they were of no importance. So in answering them, instead of answering what they asked first, you find Paul began to write to them first on the first things that were upon Paul's heart.

Paul said, I have heard, I have received information from the household of Caleb that there were divisions in your midst. The saints at Corinth, they were still gathering together. They were not being scattered or divided physically yet.

But among them there were this party spirit. Some say, I am of Paul. Some say, I am of Apollos.

Some say, I am of Cephas. And then some others say, I am of Christ in a special way. And to Paul, this is division.

We may think that division to us is when God's people are really divided and separated. But to Paul, where there is that party spirit and sectarian spirit in the church, there is already division. And unless this is corrected, eventually the church in Corinth will be broken into at least four different denominations.

Why did Paul consider this so serious? We may say that they are still together. They haven't yet been divided. Physically, they are still together.

Why did Paul get so excited over this matter? Probably the saints in Corinth thought that they were so sophisticated that they were able to tolerate these things. They could be of Paul, of Apollo, of Cephas, or even of Christ, and yet they still could be together. That was their spirituality, probably.

Now, why did Paul get so excited about this whole thing? The reason is, this attacks the very nature of the church. Other things may concern with, say, the conduct of the church, or something of the church, but this matter of division, this matter of party spirit, touches the very nature of the church. If this thing is not corrected, then the very nature of the church is corrupted.

What is the church? The ecclesia? You know, today we use the word church, but actually the English word church is not the correct translation of the Greek word ecclesia. I forgot what is the Greek word to be translated into English into church. I forgot the word.

I only have a faint memory that it is another word, and that word means something organized. But the word in the scripture ecclesia, which our Lord Jesus used, and which is used in the Bible, ecclesia means called out ones, those who are called out of this world, gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus. It is not an organization.

It is an organism. Ecclesia is in opposition to cosmos. The world is a cosmos.

The world is so organized under the prism of this world. It becomes a very highly organized thing, a cosmos, a system, whether it is religious, whether it is political, whether it is economical, in whatever area it may be. You'll find the world is so highly organized under the control of the wicked one.

It is a cosmos. But God, by his grace, through the salvation of our Lord Jesus, has delivered us out of this cosmos, out of this organized system that is hostile to God. God has delivered us out of all of it, and he has gathered us together unto himself, ecclesia.

So you'll find that ecclesia is in opposition to cosmos. We are called out of this world system, whether it is political or economical or educational or cultural or social or even religious. He has delivered us out of this world and made us ecclesia, the church or the assembly.

You know, actually, the word ecclesia, if you really want to translate it into English, should be assembly. The called out ones assembled together. Now, that is the word church.

When Paul begins his letter, he said, Paul, a called apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, and Sotomay, the brother, to the assembly of God, which is in Corinth. Paul wrote this letter to the assembly of God, which was in Corinth. I wonder if you notice the word church or assembly.

Is it in capital letter or is it in small letter? Do you find in the Bible the word church or assembly ever be in capital letter? If you put it in capital letter, it becomes a proper noun, is it? If it is in small letter, it is a common noun. The word church is a common noun. In other words, it is commonly shared by all the believers.

What is the church? The church is the called out ones assembled universally. It includes all those who belong to the Lord. It is in opposition to cosmos.

It is not a proper noun in itself. It is shared by all God's people. And locally, it is shared by all God's people in that locality.

Therefore, you'll find the word church or assembly is never capitalized. It is a common noun, not a proper noun. The assembly of God.

Why? Because the assembly belongs to God. In other words, the assembly of God is not a proper noun. We cannot make the assembly of God a proper noun and call ourselves the assembly of God in distinguishing ourselves from the other assembly.

No. The assembly of God or the church of God, the church is still in small letter. God is a proper noun, but the church is still a common noun in small letter.

In other words, it just shows us to whom does the church belong. It is not a proper noun that somebody can use it as distinguishing themselves from other believers. No.

All the believers belong to God. All the believers form the assembly of God. And you know, sometimes it is called the churches or the assemblies of Christ.

You'll find that in 1 Corinthians, in Romans chapter 16, verse 16. In the assemblies of Christ, in the churches of Christ. And again you'll find the churches of Christ is a common noun.

You cannot call yourself the church of Christ and capitalize it. The churches of Christ just tell us to whom does the church belong. We belong to Christ.

And then sometimes you'll find the Scripture says the assemblies of the saints in 1 Corinthians. Again, it is not a proper noun. It simply means that the church belongs to the saints.

So all these are descriptive words to tell us to whom does the church belong. The church belongs to God. The church belongs to Christ.

The church belongs to the saints. And then, of course, in the Scripture sometimes you'll find other descriptions such as the churches of the nations. Why? In distinguishing them from the churches in Judea and in Samaria.

And in Hebrews, even the church of the firstborn. Why? Because all those who are the Lord are firstborn in relation to the creation. All these are descriptive words.

Now, aside from these descriptive words, the other descriptions you'll find are the church which was in Corinth. Or the church in Ephesus. Or the church in Philadelphia.

The church in Corinth just tells us where was the church. Where were these people? Where did they assemble? Again, you cannot turn it around and say Corinthian church. The church in Corinth, but not Corinthian church.

The church in Ephesus, but not Ephesian church. And sometimes even you'll find the church in the house of certain person. That just shows us where the church is.

You cannot turn around and say house church. No, you don't do that. You cannot limit the church to a house.

But the church can meet in a house. The church can be in a certain locality, but that locality does not make up the church. So, brothers and sisters, you'll find in the Bible the word church is always in small letters.

It is always a common noun. It is used in this fashion. But there are other descriptions that describe the church.

But anyway, here you'll find to the assembly of God which is in Corinth. To those sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints. To those sanctified in Christ Jesus called saints.

Now, these were the people that made up the church which was in Corinth. Sanctified in Christ Jesus. Called saints.

Not called to be saints, but called saints. Now, there is a great difference here. Today, we say St. John, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. Nephew.

We canonize these evangelists as saints. And we consider ourselves as what? Not saints. But the Bible considered all who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus as saints.

Not because we are so saintly, so pious, that we are canonized to be saints, but because by the grace of God we have been sanctified in Christ Jesus. It is His work, not our work. And because of His finished work, because of His marvelous, wonderful work in our life, He has sanctified us.

He has set us apart from this world unto Himself. Therefore, we are called saints. And the saints make up the church.

The sinners do not make up the church. Sometimes we try to be very humble and say, no, we are but a sinner. Now, you may be very humble, but you are not giving the Lord His glory and honor.

The church is not made up of sinners, no. The world is made up of sinners. The church is made up of saints.

Of saints. Those that are sanctified in Christ Jesus. Now, thank God for that.

The church of God, which was in Corinth. And you find the word church here is singular in number. Not the churches of God, which was in Corinth.

But the church of God, which was in Corinth. Why? Because there is only one church. Our Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 16 and in Matthew chapter 18 used the word church twice.

In the four Gospels, you'll find the word assembly, the word ecclesia, used by the Lord only twice. One in Matthew 16, one in Matthew 18. Now, in Matthew 16, He is speaking, of course, but we will call today the church universal.

Now, that is just a way we use to distinguish. You don't find the word universal there. But the Lord said, I will build my church upon this rock.

And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will build my church. And the word church there is singular in number.

Upon this rock, this confession that He is Christ, the Son of the Living God. This revelation of the Father. This living knowledge of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, there is only one church upon one foundation. And all who confess that confession through the revelation of the Father is all a living stone, like Peter. Being built up together upon this foundation.

And the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. That is one church. The church universal.

Only one. Do you hear in Matthew chapter 18? Our Lord Jesus said, if your brother sins against you, out of love, you should go to your brother and try to bring him to his sense. Why? Not to vindicate yourself, but to restore your brother.

And if your brother does not listen to you, your duty is not finished yet. Love goes the second mile. You go and find another two brothers and with one or two witnesses, you go to the same brother and try to bring him back to the Lord.

If he does not listen, then you go and tell the church. Singular number. And the church will go and deal with that brother.

And if he does not listen to the church, then he will be looked upon as a stranger and outsider. In other words, he comes under discipline. Now here you find the Lord Jesus mentioned the word church.

But of course the word church there is used differently. In what sense? In a local sense. You cannot tell the church universal.

Where do you go to find it? It is a local problem. Not a universal problem. The conflict with the gates of Hades is a universal problem.

But a brother sing against you is a local problem. He must live pretty close to you, therefore he can sing against you. My brother in London cannot sing against me because he is so far away.

It must be a brother who lives in the same town or in the same village or in the same city. And go and tell the church. So the church here is the assembly of the faith in that locality that is, in the case of Corinth, in Corinth.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are still in this body. And being in this body, we are still subject to time and space. One day, when we put on a resurrection body, then we are delivered from time and space.

And thank God for that. How good it will be that when the door is open you can enter in. It's closed, you can enter in.

How good it will be that you can be in heaven and then you can come down on earth. You don't need a rocket. You are completely delivered from time and space.

But today we are still in this mortal body. And being in this mortal body, we are still subject to time and space. And because of that, the church universal has its local expression.

It can only be expressed locally. But all the spiritual principles in the church universal are to be practiced locally. And that's why you'll find, go and tell the church.

Singular number. One church. The church universal is one.

The church local is one. Why? Because the church local is only the local expression of the church universal. It is not something else.

One church. The very nature of the church is indivisible. The very nature of the church is oneness.

It's unity. Why? Because Christ is one. Christ is not divided.

Christ is indivisible. If you try to divide Christ, you get a dead Christ. There is a unity that is in Christ which is eternal and indivisible.

And brothers and sisters, because Christ is not divided, therefore the Christ is not divided. You know? In Greek, there is a difference there. Sometimes the word Christ is used without an article.

But sometimes the word Christ is used with an article, definite article, the before it. Now, in our English translation, you may not be able to find this. Because when the Bible is translated, people do not have that

understanding.

But if you read the Greek text, you'll find sometimes Christ is mentioned without an article. And sometimes the word Christ is used with an article there. Now, what is the difference? Whenever Christ is used without an article, it refers to Christ himself as a person.

But when the word Christ with the the preceding it, it always refers to Christ with his people, with his church. And that is the difference. So you'll find in 1 Corinthians 12, the body is one and has many members.

And though the members are many, yet the body is one, so also is the Christ. It doesn't make any sense. If so also is Christ.

Of course, Christ as a person has one body and with many members. Everybody knows that. Even a child knows that.

So it seems it would be absurd. But here you'll find because the church, which is the body of Christ, in union with the head, is composed of so many members and yet only one body, so also is the Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, why is the church cannot be divided? The one and the basic reason is because Christ is not divided.

You may think of a hundred reasons why the church should be divided. But the Bible says the church cannot be divided because Christ is not divided. If you can divide Christ, then you can divide the Christ.

When any division should come into God's people, it touches the very nature of the church. And it goes back. It's an affront, an offense to Christ.

Oh, brothers and sisters, for that reason to Paul, when these Corinthian believers began to say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ, Paul's heart was broken. He said, is the Christ divided? Can the church be divided? It cannot be. Because it is Christ who crucified for us.

Not Paul, not Apollos, not Cephas. We are baptized in the name, into the name of Jesus Christ. In the name of Jesus Christ, not in the name of Paul.

Brothers and sisters, today we are so used to division, and division to such an extent that it is not only something that is boiling within, but something that has broken out in open. And we are so used to it, then that it does not even create a problem to us. Brothers and sisters, we should be exercised before the Lord.

God has called us out as the ecclesia, in opposition to the world as gospel. Where is our testimony if we are divided? It contradicts the very nature of our calling. The very meaning of our existence.

It goes to the very heart, the very root of all things. So brothers and sisters, this is not a light thing, it's a serious thing. Why? What were the causes of such divisions and strife? What made the church in Corinth broken into such parties? What reason? Paul said, I exhort you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, and that there be not among you division, but that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Paul said, I exhort you by the name of our Lord Jesus that you all say the same thing. Now what does that mean? Does it mean that everybody has to say the same thing? Literally? That is to say, if I say, this is a good day, and you say this is a good day, this is a good day, this is a good day, everybody say this is a

good day, we are just like parrots copying and just try to uniform everything and say, well, we all say the same thing. Does it mean that? When Paul said, that you all say the same thing, now let us see what they are saying.

What they say is, one say I am of Paul, the other say I am of Apollos, the other say I am of Cephas, and the other in strife saying I am of Christ. So in other words you'll find these people of God in Corinth, they began to say different things. And the different things that they say were, some say I am of Paul, some say I am of Apollos, some say I am of Cephas, and some say I am of Christ.

Paul said, let us all say the same thing. Now it refers to that. It is not that God's people have to say the same thing mechanically.

And that is unity. Not at all. Not at all.

In a totalitarian country, they make every people say the same thing. If the leader say this is black, everybody say it is black. And tomorrow the leader say, no, this is white, and everybody say, no, it is white.

Now, does that mean they all say the same thing? No, not at all. That is not the Scripture meaning. The Scripture meaning is, instead of saying, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am Cephas, I am of Christ, let's all say the same thing.

And that is Christ, but not in sectarian spirit. Let us not say of Paul, let us not say of Apollos, let us not say of Cephas, let us not say of Christ in sectarian spirit, but let us say of Christ in a spirit that embraces all. That is saying the same thing.

Why do they say different things? And Paul said, Be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion. The word perfectly united or closely knit is a medical word. When your bones are fractured, try to knit your fractured bones together and mend it.

Or if your joint is out of joint, you reset it and connect it. Now that is the meaning behind the word perfectly united. In other words, you Corinthian believers, your body is fractured, your joints are out of socket.

Now bind them together, knit them together, mend them, and put back, reset them, so that the body may really function as one and healthily. Now that is the meaning behind it. Oh, brothers and sisters, how the body of Christ is fractured! How the body of Christ is out of joints! How unhealthy the body is! How we need to be mended up, knit together, join together, that we may live healthily before God.

So in other words, what Paul is trying to say is, let there be no division. Do not have parties and party spirits. Be one, perfectly joined together.

Why? Because we are all called by the name of our Lord Jesus. Instead of calling on the name of the Lord Jesus, some say, I am of Paul. Others say, I am of Paul.

Still others say, I am of Cephas. And in distinguishing themselves, those pseudo-spiritual people say, well, we are of... I think that's the worst possible. Because they say it with boast, with pride, spiritual pride, so-called.

Brothers and sisters, we have been given no other name but the name of our Lord Jesus, whereby we are saved. God has given us the name of our Lord Jesus. And His name is sufficient for us.

Why should we call ourselves by others, I am of Paul? Instead of holding fast ahead, we begin to group around a great man, a spiritual man, a great apostle. The apostles themselves have no intention to have their names used in that way. But it is the people who try to uplift the name of a person instead of holding fast the name of our Lord Jesus.

I remember, forgive me to use, to say something about our brother, because, as you know, I know him so well. Once, as he was talking with his fellow workers, he apologized to his associates. He said, I apologize to you.

Why? Because people label you as of me. This was not his intention. But people began to label his fellow workers as of me.

The knee party. The knee kites. So he apologized to his fellow workers and then he closed what he said with this word.

He said, the name of watching the knee is to be cursed. Brothers and sisters, Paul has no intention to lend his name to a party. Apollos had no such intention.

Nor Cephas. But here you'll find, instead of holding fast the head Christ, people began to uplift man. The name of a man.

A great man, a spiritual man. That's hero worship. Natural.

That's according to the flesh. Now why is it people want to form parties? Why? Now probably some of the people in Corinth, they received so much help from Paul. Maybe they were saved.

Through the preaching of the gospel of Paul. And Paul preached the sinful gospel to them. Christ, Jesus and him crucified and nothing else.

And they were saved. And because they were saved through the instrumentality of Paul, so naturally they surrounded Paul and said, I'm a Paul. Then other people who are more intellectual, Apollos came, a great teacher.

And he taught them all the mysteries that were hidden in the Old Testament. He expounded the mysteries, the secrets of the Old Testament to them in clarity. And these people with intellectual desire, they were greatly helped by Apollo.

So they said, I am of Apollo. I stand for him. He is my leader.

I follow him. And then some people with Jewish background, when they say, we are of Cephas. Because Cephas was the first apostle.

Brothers and sisters, is this not according to man? Is it not because they live in the flesh? Is it not a sign of carnality? Oh, how we need to hold on Christ and not to man. God may use these men to help us, but they are only channels. Our eyes should be set upon Christ.

You know, hero worship is a natural lust. Now, why do you surround a man? Why? Why? Why do you try to identify yourself with a particular person? Is it not because that man seems to be successful in what you are hoping for yourself? You want to be that, but you cannot arrive there. And someone has arrived, so you identify yourself to him.

And give you a little boost to your ego. That is of the flesh. Of the flesh.

Brothers and sisters, the name of the Lord Jesus is above everything. Whether it is the name of an apostle, or even the name of an angel, or any other name. The church has no other name but Christ.

Because the church is the Christ. The body of Christ. Joined to the head.

Indivisible. One with Christ. And one with one another.

I wonder, when they say, I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, what do they mean? What do they really mean? Do they really mean that they belong to Paul? They belong to Cephas? They belong to Apollos? Maybe they are more sophisticated than that. When they say, I am of Paul, probably, probably they mean, I am for the Christ that Paul preached. I am of Apollos, I am of the Christ that Apollos teaches.

I am of Cephas, I am of Christ that Cephas stands for. In other words, it is still Christ. But it is partial.

Not the whole Christ. I wonder if that is the reason. Probably we are too sophisticated to follow a man.

However great that man may be. But it is so subtle. We say, we stand for the Christ that that man preaches.

Oh, how often you find today, people stand for a partial truth, a certain truth, but not the whole truth. Not the whole Christ. You cannot say they are wrong.

They are right. Certainly the Christ that Paul preaches is right. But Christ is preached and taught and presented not only by Paul, but by Apollos and by Cephas.

In other words, Christ is the whole Christ. The truth that is in Christ is the whole truth. If you hold on to one particular truth and neglect the other truth, you stand for one truth against everything that is sectarian.

The word heresy in the Scripture actually means schools of opinions. You hold to a certain school of opinions. That's heresy.

Today we think of heresy as a grave error in teaching. No. The teaching may be correct, but it becomes a school of opinions.

That's heresy. Instead of holding the whole Christ. Oh, brothers and sisters, today if you look at God's people, you find some people hold on to a certain thing of Christ, some people hold on to a certain faith of Christ, and everybody seems to be circled around a path to the exclusion of the other path That is sectarian in spirit.

That is party spirit. That is dividing Christ. Oh, how we need to hold on to the whole Christ.

And then comes this last party. When some say, I'm a Paul, I'm Apollos, I'm Cephas, then they come out and say, we are more spiritual than you are. We want the whole Christ.

We are of Christ. But when they say it, they say it with exclusive spirit. As if Christ is their exclusive property and not belong to the other believers.

That is the worst. The worst. Brothers and sisters, we need the Christ preached by Paul.

We need the Christ taught by Apollos. We need the Christ presented by Cephas. We need the whole Christ.

And in an all-inclusive spirit and not an exclusive spirit. That's what we need. That will keep us one in Christ.

What is the remedy to this division? Number one, it is the name of our Lord Jesus. Paul said, I got you by the name of our Lord Jesus. With all who call upon the name, and the name is theirs as well as ours.

In other words, the name of the Lord Jesus is one. We all call upon that name. He is my property as well as your property.

We share Christ together. All brothers and sisters, if we hold fast to his name, I remember a poem. I cannot repeat the poem because I have very poor memory.

I think it's a poem written by George Whitefield. He is a fellow worker with John and Charles Wesley. And I remember he said something like that.

That all the names faded but the name of the Lord Jesus. Oh, brothers and sisters, how names divide God's people. The name of a person, even the name of a truth, or the name of a form, of a ritual, even a nation.

How names divide God's people. But we, by the name of the Lord Jesus, we are one. Is not his name sufficient for you? Must you have some other names? Secondly, how we need the message of the cross of our Lord Jesus.

Division is basically a carnal thing. Why are we divided? Because we are carnal. We act like men, people of this world.

We have here to worship. Brothers and sisters, how our own creation, how our flesh needs to be dealt with by the cross of our Lord Jesus. Oh, if we allow the cross to work in our lives, to take away that which is old, to get rid of our flesh, then we will find ourselves being one in Christ.

The unity of the Spirit is there. All we need to do is get out of the flesh, and as you are in the Spirit, you will find the unity is there. You don't need to create it.

It is already there. But we need to accept the working of the cross in our lives. It is easy to say it, but for it to work out in our lives, it is not that easy.

Basically, it is because we do not know Christ, and we do not know the cross. That is the reason why we are divided. But thank God.

The name of the Lord Jesus is given to us, and the cross is here. The only thing is, are we willing to yield ourselves to Him, and let the Holy Spirit apply the cross to our flesh, that there may be no boasting of the flesh. If we boast, we boast in the Lord.

So, here you find in the first chapter, Paul deals exclusively with this first and foremost problem that existed in the church at Corinth. Brothers and sisters, how about us today? We would like to begin 1 Corinthians with chapter 7, but Paul begins with chapter 1. So I do hope that, not in a spirit of judging, I hope you understand, but I hope in a spirit of love, that we may bring these things to the Lord, because if

we know the heart of God, this is something that makes Him suffer more than anything else. The other things are important, but this is basic.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father, how we praise and thank Thee for Thy Word. Thou dost tell us, is the Christ divided? And there can be no other answer but one. The Christ is not divided.

Oh, how can we divide Christ? It is impossible. So Lord, we do pray, because this is the truth, that we may not be divided in any way, whether externally or even internally. We pray that Thou would deliver us from party spirit, from sectarian spirit, and Thou would deliver us from all appearance of evil, that we may truly be an expression of the oneness of the body of Christ in where Thou hast put us.

We ask in the name of our Lord Jesus and for His glory. Amen.

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