LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 1: 10-17

A church divided

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 27, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

This is our second study in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Let's get going with verses 10 through 17. We're going to read through the whole section and then come back and unpack these verses. All right, here we go. I appeal to you brothers by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says I follow Paul or I follow Apollos or I follow Cephas or I follow 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 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. Well, this is where Paul is now going to begin to address some of the issues in the Corinthian Church and he doesn't get very deep into it here yet, but he does tell us at the very beginning of this section that the issue that he wants to begin to address is that of the divisions. And really it was kind of a sectarian sort of attitude among the people where they were rallying behind people they thought were kind of their heroes, you know, to the point where they were dividing into groups, you know, and somebody would say, you know, we follow Paul and over here we've got the Apollos group, you know, they're fans of Apollos and over here these people are fans of Peter who is mentioned as Cephas in this passage.

And then there were others who said, well, we follow Jesus and it's hard to say whether that was the group that was correct or the group that was just being super spiritual. We're not really sure. Either way, Paul didn't like it. He heard about this, that it was going on from some of the people from Chloe's

household and he's now confronting them about it. And he's going to get more into it as we get on into the following chapter and so forth.

This chapter, really the rest of chapter one, Paul is going to argue for the fact that all of this is ridiculous and that all kind of centers around a question that he asks them and it's this, is Christ divided? Well, that's a rhetorical question. Obviously Christ is not divided. And so the logical question to the Corinthians is then why are you? Right?

If Jesus is not divided, then why are you divided? This seems to be an issue that we fallible humans have repeated many, many times since. We have this tendency and I really believe that the root of it is pride. But there's this tendency among us to be identified, to want to be identified in a way that sets us apart from other people, you know, and in a good way. And so that's why people usually rally around a certain personality or celebrity or something like that.

And it becomes a matter of pride. It becomes a very carnal expression of our lives. And that's what was going on. In fact, later on in this letter, I believe it's chapter three, Paul is going to say to these people, you know, I can't even talk to you guys as spiritually mature people. I have to address you as carnal Christians because you just haven't grown up.

Your actions show me that you haven't grown up in Christ. And so he begins at this point and he confronts their factions and their groups and their divisions. And after asking that rhetorical question, is Christ divided? Paul then goes on to say, was Paul crucified for you? And the reason he's obviously asking that is because why in the world would you rally around me?

He's saying, I am just a servant of the Lord. In fact, he's going to make that point later on. I'm just a servant. Why would you rally around a servant when you have a savior? Right?

Isn't it interesting? You know, we kind of tend to put our hope in our fellow human beings, people that have no more power than we have, no more ability than we have, and yet we put our hope in these people. It really is kind of amazing. We see it happening every time there's going to be a new national election here in the United States, whether it's, you know, for president or for someone running for senator or governor, sometimes even mayor. Why would you create, and this is Paul's question, a hero out of this person when you already have a savior?

Boy, that is just, that's a very penetrating question. He says, were you baptized in the name of Paul? These people obviously were baptized in water, and when they were baptized, they were baptized as they were told to be baptized. We read about that in the Great Commission at the end of the book of Matthew.

Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So they were baptized in the authority that Jesus laid down as it relates to the Trinity. So Paul says, were you baptized in, does anybody ever remember saying the name of the apostle Paul when you were baptized? Obviously not. And then Paul goes on to actually sound relieved that he didn't baptize that many people at Corinth, lest they put even greater emphasis on who he was and that sort of thing. He says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.

And you can almost imagine that at this point, Sosthenes, who is there taking this letter down through dictation, stops Paul and he says, sir, I seem to remember also that you baptized another household. And so that's why Paul adds in verse 16 this parenthetical statement. Oh, yeah, he says, I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. But beyond that, I can't really remember if I baptized anyone else. And he's glad.

He's glad he didn't baptize anyone else. Obviously because of the issues of division. But then Paul goes on to make a really fascinating statement that I think we need to pay attention to. And that statement is in verse 17. For Christ did not send me to baptize.

What did Christ send Paul to do but to preach the gospel? And then we'll talk about the last part of what he says there in just a moment. I think this is a really important statement. I got to tell you. The Apostle Paul said Christ did not send me to baptize.

Now this statement, I got to tell you, this thing flies in the face of the teaching that we call baptismal regeneration. And that teaching gained that name because the people who hold to it believe that you must be baptized to be born again. Thus the name, baptismal regeneration. I personally believe that water baptism is very important. It's vitally important in the life of the believer.

But I do not see in the Word where the Bible declares that without water baptism, a person cannot be saved. Now those who strongly believe leave in the idea of water baptism usually hold to a particular passage in the book of Acts. It's in chapter two and verse 38. And it's a passage where Peter is addressing the crowd and he's been sharing the gospel with them. And the Bible tells us that the people were cut to the heart.

I mean, they really saw that they were sinners and they needed to be forgiven. And they called out and they said, what must we do? And Peter goes on, and particularly in that verse in Acts chapter two, saying

that they were to repent, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to also submit to water baptism. And he said, and you would be saved.

Now, there are a good many people who take that passage in Acts chapter two, and they believe in a rather rigid sort of a way that Peter is actually giving a systematic understanding of what is required in order for a person to be saved. In other words, it begins with repenting and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then be baptized. And then you will be forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit. And they take it in a very rigid sort of a sense and they teach it that way, as to say, if you are not baptized in water, you cannot be saved. In other words, you can believe on the Lord Jesus all day long.

You can declare him to be your savior. You can repent of your sin. You can cry out to the Lord, but if you die before you are baptized in water, you're going to hell. I just don't believe it. And one of the, well, there's several reasons why I don't believe it.

But one is the statement here in 1 Corinthians chapter one, where Paul says, Christ did not send me to baptize. Listen, if baptism is required for salvation, that was a very, very reckless thing for Paul to say. If he was literally telling people, I'm not called to do what is required for people to be saved. And if he actually said to these people, I'm glad I didn't baptize very many of you. And yet it is required for salvation.

Those are very, very, very reckless comments in that case. The fact of the matter is there are many other passages in the Bible where salvation is spoken about that make absolutely no mention of water baptism. One of them is Ephesians two, eight, and nine, where Paul writes, it is by grace you have been saved through faith. And this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God and not by works, lest anyone should boast. So Paul outlines how we're saved, by grace, God's unmerited favor, through faith, putting our confidence and trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

That's how we're saved. He doesn't mention water baptism. Now, was water baptism unimportant later on or something? No, no, water baptism continued to be a very important thing for people who were already saved, and that's the point. You know, water baptism is an interesting topic, and I wanna just enlarge on this if I could for just a moment, because there's a lot of Christians who really don't understand a great deal about water baptism.

And I will tell you in all honesty that the Bible doesn't really reveal the essence or the reasons behind why we should be baptized in water. It doesn't go through and tell us. It simply says, when people get

saved, baptize them in water. But we can understand some things from the word of God that help us to kind of fill in the gaps. But we start by talking about why Jesus was baptized.

You do remember Jesus was baptized in water, right? Now, it wasn't Christian baptism that he went through. It was John's baptism. That's what we call it. The baptism of John the Baptist, who was the man who came to prepare the way for the Messiah by turning the hearts of the people of Israel back to the Lord.

He did it by telling the people they needed to confess their sin and come into the Jordan and be baptized. The Bible tells us in Luke's gospel that those who got baptized by John were able to hear and understand what Jesus was saying. And they accepted it as the word of God. Those who didn't get baptized, they didn't. Now, why did Jesus get baptized in water?

Have you ever asked that question? Have you ever thought about it? Why did Jesus get baptized? Well, I'll tell you something. John wanted to know the answer to that question.

When Jesus made his way into the waters of the Jordan, John said to him, wait a minute, I need to be baptized by you. And yet you come to me? Jesus said, it's okay. Let's do this. We need to fulfill all righteousness.

And he was baptized. But why? Remember, John's baptism was a baptism of repentance and Jesus had nothing for which he needed to repent. Jesus was sinless. So why did he get into the waters of John's baptism?

Well, the answer to that question is he came to identify with sinful man. He came to identify with you and me. And he took that identification all the way to the cross where he would bear the penalty of our sin. We understand in like manner, when we get baptized, we are also identifying with him in his death, burial, and resurrection. Have you ever seen somebody get baptized in water?

I've been in the tank or in the river many, many times. I've baptized many, many people. I don't even know how many people over the years. But we get into the water with someone who desires to be baptized. And this is somebody who has previously confessed their faith in Jesus and what he did for them on the cross.

And we begin to lay them back into the water. This signifies death. And then for just a moment, we submerge them all the way in the water. This signifies burial. And then we bring them back up out of the water, which signifies resurrection.

And of course, they've been in the water, which signifies cleansing. So there's all these symbols and pictures that go along with water baptism where Jesus identified with us in the waters of John's baptism. We identify with Jesus in the waters of Christian baptism. And we identify with his death, his burial, and his resurrection. And it is a beautiful picture of something that born-again believers do publicly as a testimony of their identification with Christ.

It really is a beautiful picture. So that's what water baptism is about. It's about identifying with Jesus. And because of that, it's a very important thing that we do. But water baptism doesn't save you.

Jesus saves you. You know, we gotta be careful as believers not to elevate the symbol above the water of the reality. You know, there are a lot of things that are symbols in our Christian life, even as believers. We were given another symbol by Jesus, and that was communion. He said, as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me.

Well, we know that the bread is symbolic of his body. We know that the cup is symbolic of his blood. But what would happen if we elevated the symbols above the reality? And we started telling people, unless you take communion, you cannot be saved. You see what we're doing?

We're taking the symbols, and we're making them a means to an end. We're literally taking these symbols and making them as important as what they point to, what they reflect. Well, it's really the same thing with water baptism. Water baptism is a symbol, a symbolic identification with Christ that speaks of our identity. identification with Him and our cleansing that we get from Him.

But we don't elevate the symbol above the reality. Jesus saves you through His death on the cross. That's how you are saved, right? All these other things are symbols. And that's an important reminder.

This section of scripture ends with Paul saying, again, Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. And then he said, and not with words of eloquent wisdom. That's the kind of stuff that he knew that would draw people to him. But Paul didn't come with words of eloquent wisdom. Actually, that was Apollos.

He was much more eloquent than was Paul. In fact, Paul came very simply and said, I'm just going to bring the simple gospel to you. I don't want you to put your trust in me. I want you to understand the power of the message that I'm giving. And that's why he said, if I were to speak to you with words of eloquence and use all kinds of four- and five-syllable words to impress you, all I would end up doing would be to empty the cross of its power.

That's how he ends this section in verse 17. So I want to encourage those of you who may have hesitated sharing the gospel with someone because you weren't sure if you could do a very good job about it. Maybe you lack the words. Maybe you're not good at that sort of thing. Well, listen, you don't have to be good because it's not you.

It's not you who makes the gospel powerful. It's the cross that makes the gospel powerful. So don't hesitate. When you get an opportunity to just speak of the cross, talk about it in the simplest terms you can. As Paul says, not with eloquent wisdom.

Just lay it out there. Just tell people, hey, Jesus suffered on the cross for you, that you might be saved. That is the power of the cross. Well, that's where we're going to stop for this second session of 1 Corinthians. And we'll pick it up in verse 18 next time we come together.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the power of the cross. And Lord, we confess to you that as humans, we do tend to kind of rally around people. But Lord, forgive us. We're not to do that.

We are to come to you and trust in you always. Help us, Lord, not to put our faith in people, but to put our faith completely in you and to trust you with all of our hearts. And help us, Lord, to be brave to just share the simple gospel and the powerful message. And help us, Lord, to be brave, courageous, and to be simple about the way we talk about the cross, lest it be emptied of its power. Thank you, Lord, for our time together.

I pray your blessing. I pray the ministry of your Holy Spirit throughout this week to speak to us about these things. And I pray that we would continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior. Through Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.