



# Potomac Hills

## Presbyterian Church, PCA

By Grace Alone ~ Through Faith Alone ~ In Christ Alone

The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
1 Corinthians 1:10-17

September 10, 2017  
English Standard Version

---

### “Cross Words: Unity”

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Sermon in a series on The Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians

#### 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

*“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. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup> 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.” <sup>13</sup> Is Christ **divided**? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> 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.”*

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We need to be reminded of the Greatness of the Gospel, the Power of the Cross, and the Glory of Christ! We need to know the sufficiency of Your Word for our lives. Speak to us in Your holy and inerrant Word. Would You pour out the Holy Spirit to take up Your Word and wield it with power in our hearts to kill pride, heal **division**, and to establish our **unity** in Jesus for the glory of Your great name? Thank You that **1st Corinthians** is a love letter to unlovely people, pointing them, and us, to our Redeemer. We need the redemption He offers. Bring us to the Cross, Bring us the grace of repentance, Soften our hard hearts, Have mercy upon us. And so we pray, by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.*

## INTRODUCTION: “A *Divided People*”

So it **appears** that our society is torn apart by deep **divisions**, isn't it? It's obvious, not just from our **deeply polarized** political situation, but from virtually every measurement of society's condition. You can check out the latest crop of books on the state of our country, the social commentators, the futurists who are trying to determine where we're headed (since no one seems to know), and virtually everything written by the Political Scientist Charles Murray. We have his book, **Coming Apart**; as well as **Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America** by James Campbell; **Tales of Two Americas** by John Freeman; **Deeply Divided** by Doug McAdam; and at least four books with the title **Divided America**.

One of the mottos of our country is “E Pluribus Unum” – “From the many, one.” That expresses an **aspiration**, a **longing**, for **unity**. And yet however far we've come as a society from our founding, don't we have to admit there are **still profound divisions** among us? We are **fragmented** and **divided**. Along lines of class and race and education and culture and economics and religion and politics and a hundred other things. **Unity** is the desire of our hearts, something we **aspire** to, **long** for, but we have to confess that it's a **perpetually elusive goal**.

And so it really shouldn't be all that much of a surprise to discover that **division** and **disunity** is a problem that rears its ugly head – not just out there in the world – but from time to time in here, in the Church. And we have our own collection of books on the subject, including **Divided by Faith** by Michael Emerson and **Divided by God** by Noah Feldman.

And there's little doubt that this is the problem to be addressed at Corinth. So far we've seen Paul introducing himself and some of the major themes of his letter. But now, in verses 10 to 17, he begins to address problems more directly. Up to now, it's been a **generally** positive introduction. Now he's responding to **specific** information that he's received about their particular problems. That information has reached Paul by two different routes. When we get to **chapter 7, verse 1** we're going to see that Paul's actually received a letter from the Corinthians. They've asked for counsel on points of controversy and confusion in their church. But if you look down at **verse 11**, you'll notice that information has come by another route. Some of Chloe's people, presumably members of the Corinthian church, have been with Paul and were eye-witnesses to the problems plaguing the church in Corinth. And so, Paul is responding, not just to the letter, but to firsthand accounts of issues in the church.

Just as an aside, I can't help but think about that Sunday, as I wrote in the weekly email, during that worship service – you come in, you take your seat at Corinth, the elder stands up and says, “Now everyone, we've received a letter from the Apostle Paul. I'm going to read it to you.” And so he begins **verse 1**, “*Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and Sosthenes our brother.*” And everyone smiles and nods. “Paul's writing to us! Isn't that lovely? And Sosthenes, you remember him. He's working with Paul now. Isn't that great?” And the letter goes on. It's encouraging, upbeat. Paul is writing words of thanks to God concerning all that he sees God doing in our midst. And the elder continues to read until you get to **verse 11**, “*For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.*” And a sudden chill begins to steal through the room as every head turns to glare at Chloe and her household as they studiously stare at their shoes and try to sink as low in their chairs as they can go. It must have been pretty tense for the church in Corinth!

I mean, can you imagine? This would be like me getting up here next week and saying, “Now it has been reported to me that Mark Rist is a heretic. And I have to take it seriously

because Jed Faroe said it.” [Nothing like that has ever happened, don’t start any rumors] But I mean, after the shock wore off, everyone would start taking sides. **That’s exactly** what’s happening in Corinth. Sharp **divisions** began to emerge.

Paul’s agenda in this letter, in other words — and if we’ll allow God’s Word to do its work in our lives, God’s agenda for us as we read **1st Corinthians** together in the weeks ahead — is to strip out all the old, tangled, confused wiring of the world and to re-wire our spiritual systems entirely with this simple, clear truth of **the Good News about Jesus Christ**. And so **1st Corinthians** is dealing with the real issues which we all struggle with ... even now. What work of grace might the Lord intend in our lives ... and in our life together as a church ... as we come under the teaching of this book? I want you, over these coming weeks, to begin to **pray** with me that God would take hold of our hearts and our minds and our lives by His Word in this Book of **1st Corinthians** and begin that re-wiring work among us. So, let’s get started. And our text today begins with ...

#### **v. 10: AN APPEAL FOR UNITY <sup>1</sup>**

In **verse 10** Paul sets out **the fundamental theme of the entire letter**, “*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.*” In fact, most everything which follows through **chapter 4** grows out of Paul’s appeal here: that there may be **no divisions**, and that the Corinthians be **united**. The **division** within the church stands in sharp contrast to the ideal set forth in the previous verse, **1 Corinthians 1:9**, “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Sadly, the Corinthians are not characterized by their **fellowship**, due to the **divisions** within their ranks. When Paul had left they were **united** around a common **fellowship** with the Risen Savior. Now they are **divided** into **factions** identifying with their favorite teacher.

Paul doesn’t use a harsh rebuke as he does in Galatians. Rather, he appeals to the members of this church as his **brothers**, a term of endearment which he’ll use some **39 times** in this epistle. Paul knows these people personally, they’ve been called into **fellowship** with Christ through the gospel. Paul makes an appeal to them with Christ’s authority, with which he, as an Apostle, now speaks. Paul’s appeal is that “*all of you agree*” (literally, “**speak the same thing**”). This is a classical way of speaking about **being united**. The problem is that various “**divisions**” have formed within the church, destroying their **unity**.

The word Paul uses here for **division** is *schismata*, from which we get our word ‘**schism**,’ and it literally means ‘**splits**.’ In this context, it should probably be understood in the sense of ‘**factions**’ or ‘**cliques**,’ which had been formed in the church as people began following a favorite teacher – as we’ll see in **verse 12**. Instead of being **divided**, Paul exhorts the

---

**1 The Introduction and Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, Preaching the Word: 1 Corinthians by Dr. Stephen Um, preached at CityLife Presbyterian Church (PCA), Boston, MA, pages 23-30; The Lectio Continua Expository Commentary on the New Testament: First Corinthians by Dr. Kim Riddlebarger, pages 18-24; Calling Christian Leaders: Rediscovering Radical Servant Ministry by Dr. John R.W. Stott, pages 27–33; The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life In The Local Church by Dr. David Prior, pages 28–38; and 1 Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical & Pastoral Commentary by Dr. Anthony Thiselton, pages 38-42. **And the sermons, “United We Stand”** by Dr. David Strain, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, 1/15/17, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org); “*The Divided Church*” by Dr. Marian Clark, Lake Oconee Presbyterian Church (PCA), Eatonton, GA, 9/22/02, [www.dmcresources.com](http://www.dmcresources.com).**

Corinthians to “*be united in the same mind and the same judgment,*” using a verb which means restoring something to its proper condition. It’s the same verb used in **Matthew 4** where James and John were “*mending their nets.*” It was also used for a shoulder that was dislocated, that was popped back into its socket. So, essentially Paul is telling the Corinthians that “You’re not to be torn apart by **schism** but **mended** and **knit** together in love; not to be a church whose members are put out of joint” as we might say “but one that is whole and mobile and ready for action.” The Corinthians are to **repair** their fractured **unity** by **restoring** their thinking and **refocusing** upon the doctrine of Christ, not the personalities of those teaching them.

And notice how far that **unity** has to penetrate. It’s not superficial, is it? They’re to confess **the same truths**, share **the same convictions**. Their **unity** is to be founded on a common commitment to a **body of truth**, confessed and preached in their midst. Of course, it goes even deeper than that. **Unity** touches not just what they said but how they thought. He wants them to “*be united in the same mind and the same judgment.*” They are to **discipline** their minds and submit **even their private judgments to the authority of the Word of God**. This is not merely verbal, superficial consensus. There’s no “go along to get along” here. This is a deep, thorough, root and branch, head and heart, word and deed **unity**. And so you see the dimensions of the problem confronting the Corinthian church, can’t you? **Division**, after all, fueled by ego, **is easy**. And **unity**, the kind to which Paul is calling us to, **is hard work**. That’s a tough call to hear from the Apostle Paul.

And Paul understand that. That’s why he takes time to call out ...

#### v. 11-12: **THE OBSTACLES TO UNITY**

Now Paul is tackling the issue before them head-on. I think it’s fascinating that **of all the problems** confronting the Corinthian church, **number one** on Paul’s list, **the first thing** he wants to address, is the problem of **division** and **disunity**? **Division** and **disunity** are **the Obstacles to Unity**. As we read **verses 11 to 16**, I want you to listen out for **two things** in particular. **First** of all, **Paul’s diagnosis**. He tells us about the problem to be avoided. The serious problem of **division** in the church. And then **secondly**, **Paul’s prescription**, the principle that we must apply, which comes out of the rhetorical questions in **verse 13**, and which must be applied if we’re to overcome **division** and establish **unity**.

**First, Paul’s diagnosis**, starting at **verse 11**, “*For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.*”<sup>12</sup> *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.”* They are **quarreling, bickering** about the respective merits of their particular party. There are **divisions** or **schisms** tearing the church apart. And there are two factors in particular that cause these tears in the fabric of the Corinthian fellowship. In the first place, as you can see on the surface of **verse 12**, there is **the cult of personality**. But then, standing **behind the cult of personality** and giving it its power and force, is what we call **the cult of personal pride**. **The cult of personality** and **the cult of personal pride**. Both of them are found in **verse 12**.

**First, the cult of personality**. These groups are each claiming to be the standard bearers for a particular and much-loved leader or approach to the Christian life. First of all, there’s **the Paul party**. Paul is the one who planted the church at Corinth. And these folks claim to be the stalwart defenders of the original vision, “We’re the Paul people; loyal to the good old days and the good old ways. That’s not how Paul would have done it. That’s now how Paul would have

said it. Things were so much better when Paul was here.” Those are the expressions of the Paul party.

But then, in addition to the Paul party, another party arose within the Corinthian congregations – **the Apollos party**. Apollos came from the city of Alexandria. Luke, in the book of **Acts**, tells us he was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures, enthusiastic about spiritual things. He accurately taught the things concerning Jesus. Apollos eventually made his way to Corinth. And there he helped those who, through grace, had believed. He powerfully refuted the Jews in public by using the Scriptures to show that Jesus was the Christ. And Apollos is a great preacher. He’s a skilled orator. He’s a passionate expositor of the Bible. And the church at Corinth was **blessed** through his ministry. The members of this party were always downloading Apollos’ sermons on their iPhone and re-tweeting his best quotes on their Twitter feeds. They were all about Apollos. Apollos was the grid through which they measured every other ministry and everyone else’s Christian life. That’s the Apollos party.

And then along comes another group within the Corinthian fellowship, **the party of Cephas**. At some point, people have moved to Corinth who weren’t influenced by Paul nor Apollos but presumably were led to faith in Christ or came under the influence particularly of Cephas; otherwise known as **the Apostle Peter**. They’re unfamiliar with Apollos’ ministry and they don’t know Paul. For them, Cephas is the key guy. After all, he’s kind of the head apostle, right, let’s follow him. And then there’s one more **division** in the church. These guys, I think, are the worst of the bunch. These are the holier-than-thou, no creed but Christ crowd, and they are, of course, **the Jesus party**. They pretend to stand above everyone else. “You people are all squabbling about Paul or Apollos or Cephas, but we’re the Jesus people ... **And We Get It Right**.” And so there’s this growing **rift** between these different groups using Paul and Apollos and Peter, even Jesus, like brand names or badges, not simply to identify a set of convictions but to belittle others who don’t share them.

And why are they doing that? Why do people still do that today? That gets as the second cause of **division**. Behind **the cult of personality, there’s the cult of personal pride**. Listen again to the text! There’s one thing at Corinth that unites them all; one thing they all have in common. Listen again to **verse 12**, “*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.”*** What is it that they all have in common? Not their favorite leader **but their massive egos**. They seek to enlist their favorite leader, attach their own names to the names of their chosen one, in order somehow to borrow some of their perceived glory, to attach themselves to the glamour of this person that he might make them look good.

We’ve all heard people do it, haven’t we, to drop a name here or there as you establish your credentials? Maybe you’ve done it yourself sometime? I know I have. You’re just letting folks know that you’re on first-name terms with that preacher or this author or that leader. You know how it goes. “Oh, I remember when Dr. So-and-So was saying to me the other day blah-blah-blah... You know Dr. So-and-So, don’t you? Oh, you don’t know? Let me introduce you sometime ... just stick with me!” Well, what is that? That’s ego! It’s not really about Dr. So-and-So at all. **It’s all about me!** “**I follow Paul**” or “**I follow Apollos**” or “**I follow Cephas**” or “**I follow Christ**.” Behind the cult of personality lurks **the cult of personal pride** and it was tearing the Corinthians apart.

And the Apostle Paul answers them by re-focusing their attention on ...

## v. 13-17: THE SOURCE OF UNITY

*“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* <sup>14</sup> *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,* <sup>15</sup> *so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name.* <sup>16</sup> *(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)* <sup>17</sup> *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.”* Now we come to **the second part, Paul’s prescription**, the principle that we must apply, which must be applied if we’re to overcome **division** and establish **unity**. The very thought of such **division** leads Paul to ask **three rhetorical questions** in **verse 13**, all of which expose **the foolishness** of such thinking ... *“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* The first question, *“Is Christ divided?”* gets at the logical consequence of what results from this division. Ironically, **the body of Christ** is being torn apart by those who claim to be **followers of Christ!**

*Is Christ divided?* A **divided** church means a **divided** Christ. If you have Christ, you have all of Him. Jesus can’t be **divided**. We can’t have half a person. This, incidentally, throws light on such common phrases as ‘wanting more of Christ’. You can’t. You either have Him or you don’t. Rather, **we should be allowing Christ to have more of us**. We are the **divided** ones whom Christ is making whole, so that we become more like Him.

I think this question could also mean to apportion out in the sense of as one group gets Paul, another Apollos, yet another Peter, so another gets Christ, as though He were but another choice. What are you thinking? Paul wants to know. How could you ever consider putting our Lord Jesus Christ on the same plane as me and Apollos and Peter? Paul’s second argument against **disunity** is, if anything, even more vivid ...

*Was Paul crucified for you?* Did Paul perform the work of redemption on the cross atoning for the sins of his people? When you put Christ in the same breath as anyone else, you are bringing Him down and raising up the other person in a blasphemous manner. Paul’s challenging the Corinthians to drop their cult of personality **and to fix their attention on Christ once again**. That was the focus of his message when Paul first preached to them, **1 Corinthians 2:2**, *“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* That was the message which had attracted them from the outset. They owed their salvation **to Christ**. It was **Christ** who died for their sins and brought them forgiveness — not Apollos, not Peter, not Paul. They knew the reality of being redeemed.

Whenever Christians give their allegiance to any human personality, such as a gifted preacher, they have taken their eyes off Christ and there will inevitably be **disunity**. Jesus Christ is the only one who can **unite** men and women and He does so through **the cross**, because we can come to God only via **the cross of Christ**. We never move on from **the cross**.

Paul’s third argument against **disunity** is about their allegiance ...

*Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* To be baptized in the name of a person is to give one’s allegiance to that person. It is to be covered by the person, placed under His protection. It is to be identified as **belonging** to that person. Did Paul baptize anyone in his name? Of course not. This is why we baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – so that you know, and everyone else knows, that you belong to the Triune God, who rules and reigns over this world and the next. Paul expresses relief that he personally baptized very few of the Corinthians so that this confusion would not be widespread.

But it is this question, “*Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” – to which the answer is obviously “*no*” – which leads Paul to conclude in **verses 14-16**, “*I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)*” Apparently, it was his practice, following the example of Christ, to delegate baptism, which was done in the name of Christ, to the officers of the church ... in theory, to avoid the very problem Paul is dealing with here – “I was baptized by so and so, hence am a follower of so and so.” Paul also baptized **entire households** – which also serves as important evidence for infant baptism.

The factions in Corinth may have been based, in part, upon the fact that the individuals were baptized by the people just mentioned (except Christ, of course). This may have led to the unfortunate situation in which the baptized individuals formed an illegitimate connection to the person who baptized them. This is why Paul is thankful that he baptized so few of them, so that people could not claim to be baptized into Paul’s name.

So, Paul asserts in **verse 17**, “*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.*” Paul clearly understands his divinely-appointed mission is to preach the gospel. The office of apostle is centered in the responsibility of preaching in an evangelistic context (by planting churches), with the day to day responsibility for church life assigned to the officers in the church – ministers of word and sacrament, elders and deacons.

Notice how Paul is concerned the Corinthians realize the preaching of the cross does not center in “*words of eloquent wisdom*” or, as some translations have it, “*cleverness in speech.*” This comment may have been added by Paul because people often like the preacher more than the message, or because the Corinthians were preoccupied with “wisdom,” which in Greek culture was a reference to a skilled orator and a story-teller who could keep your attention. And there’s a big difference between preaching Christ and impressing people with your “wisdom.”

To a Greek audience, **the cross** is an unpopular message of **shame** and **scandal** centering in a crucified God. But **the cross** is the divinely appointed means by which God saves sinners. Preaching which softens or weakens **the cross**, nullifies **the power of the cross** by drawing people to the preacher, not to the Savior. As Paul sees it, Christian preaching centers in a particular message – the doing and dying of Jesus Christ – however scandalous that message may sound. The gospel is not grounded in the eloquence or rhetorical skills of the preacher. In fact, it was the attraction to the styles and abilities of various preachers which was the root of the problem in Corinthian. People liked other preachers more than they liked the Gospel. They broke into factions without considering the content of what was preached. And the Corinthians ended-up **dividing** into factions. And, Paul says this must stop. Those who are members of this church **need to be united.**

What, then, do we take with us from this section of **1 Corinthians**? Paul’s warning to the Corinthians about the ease in which **divisive factions** form needs to be heard. It’s here where we see the wisdom of being a “confessional church.” Reformed Christians don’t say “we follow John Calvin” because the officers don’t subscribe to Calvin’s personal views or his theology. Instead, we subscribe to ***The Westminster Confession of Faith***. By confessing a common faith, spelled out in some detail in ***The Westminster Confession***, we have a built-in defense against **division**. We confess a common faith. We believe the same doctrines.

That said, we're **just as sinful** as the Corinthians and **just as prone** to factions and division. As Reformed Christians, we need to be careful about identifying too closely with an influential teacher or writer (as often happens with some gifted teacher like R. C. Sproul or Tim Keller). Instead, we should direct our allegiance to **that doctrine** regarding the person and work of Christ found in **that confession** which spells out the content of our faith, and to which we agree. When we say we're "Reformed," we're confessing a common faith, defined in *The Westminster Confession*, which we believe summarizes the Bible's teaching about Christ, His gospel, and His church. Our common doctrine **unites** us.

**APPLICATION: *We have been Mended and Blessed*** <sup>2</sup>

Sometimes it seems hard to apply passages like this one to our lives. This portion of Paul's letter seems foreign to us. When was the last time you heard anyone claim to be "of Paul," "of Peter," or "of Apollos"? Yet, when we look more closely, we begin to see that our lives and churches parallel the church Paul addressed in many ways. To begin with, Paul said at least **two things** about the church that are very important for us to apply to our lives.

**First, the church today is blessed** in countless ways just as the Corinthians were. We've been set apart as God's people, and we have many blessings that the rest of the world doesn't enjoy. Chief among these gifts is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He has blessed us richly with Spiritual gifts and graces that encourage us as we wait for the return of our Lord. Although the Corinthians faced many difficulties in their day, Paul rejoiced in God's blessing to them and he encouraged them to rejoice with him. No matter what difficulties the church faces today, we should always approach these troubles with a firm awareness of the many blessings of the Spirit that we have received from God.

**Second, the church today is bonded together** by the blessings we have received in Christ. Our utter dependence on Christ and His power to redeem us **unites** all believers in fellowship. Most of us don't value our brothers and sisters because we forget that we and they are all equally in need of Christ and the power of His death and resurrection.

It goes without saying that churches shouldn't allow their internal politics and disagreements to **tear apart** their fellowship, but these problems arise so often that it bears repeating. When we have **divisions** in our churches, we need to evaluate carefully why these **divisions** happened. Are we legitimately separating ourselves from those who deny the gospel? Or are we **dividing** and **quarreling** because of **pride**? By keeping Christ central, we can avoid many of the factions that develop around persons and secondary doctrines. Perhaps by remembering the church's call to be holy, we can refrain from actions that damage our church's witness in the community. We need to **refocus** our attention on the blessings we've received: forgiveness, salvation, knowledge, spiritual gifts, friendship, and **unity** with Christ. If we keep our disagreements in perspective, we won't be willing to **divide** the church for reasons **contrary to the gospel of Christ**.

That is, after all, where the power lies. Not in the preacher but in **the Christ** He preaches. Not in oratory or sacraments or liturgy or ritual or form, but in **the Christ** who meets us as we gather in His name. And so, let the good news about Jesus, what He has done for you, out of His love for you, fill your soul again, and you'll find that ego begins to die and with it, our

---

<sup>2</sup> The application is adapted from the article "*Greetings and an Earnest Appeal*" by Dr. Richard Pratt, IJIM Magazine, Vol. 3, No. 32, August 2001.

**divisions** crumble. We'll find the ground level at the foot of the cross. Isn't that the case when we come back to **the cross**? The ground is level at **the cross**. We're all even, we're all the same, we're all forgiven sinners looking to our Savior. We look to Jesus – bearing the condemnation we deserve – and we see that we are, all of us, without hope, save in God's sovereign mercy, wretched sinners deserving the wrath and curse of God. Nothing to boast in there. Then we look again at **the cross** and we see Him pouring Himself out for us. And because He did, we're saved. He's done it all and I take no glory for it, and neither can you, and therefore, the ground is level, at the foot of **the cross**. As we fill our gaze with Jesus, ego dies and **divisions** crumble.

Because we're all self-centered sinners, the only way we can "**be united**" is to keep our eyes on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins and was raised for our justification, so that He might save us to be members of **His body**, which is **His church**. And because He came to save His people, we need to agree and "**be united in the same mind and the same judgment**" by confessing a **common** faith. We avoid **division** by seeking that which is best for **His body**, even if that means putting our agendas aside. Therefore, we need to keep the gospel always before us. Jesus died to redeem us as individuals whom He joins to **His church**. Seeking to **divide** that body which Christ died to create is a serious thing. It's because Christ died for us (as individuals and as a church) that Paul can say "*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.*" Paul's not just appealing to the church in Corinth, he's also appealing to the church here, to you and to me.

We should take his appeal seriously ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I'll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Lord, we confess to You that oftentimes our own pride and ego have led us to speak and act and think and harbor attitudes and cultivate a disposition that is hostile to Christian **unity**. So as we come together this morning, back to the cross, to the level ground at the foot of the cross, would You strip us of all boasting, show us the bankruptcy of our own claims to greatness. Instead, would You capture our hearts and minds with the greatness and goodness and sufficiency of Jesus Christ? He is enough; altogether sufficient for our needs. And as we remember that, would You unite us as we celebrate our union with Christ and our union, therefore with each other in Him? Forgive us and work in these weeks and months ahead of us through **1st Corinthians** — teach us who we really are in Jesus and to strengthen us as we seek to live these words out for your glory and honor and praise. And as we begin to be re-wired by the Gospel, would You make use of us in ways surpassing our expectations in this part of our **community**, in our workplaces, among our friends and family, and all over the world. Grant that we may live like people called to be saints, **united** in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

This message has been lightly edited and formatted for the web page. No attempt has been made to alter the basic extemporaneous delivery style, or to produce a grammatically accurate, publication-ready manuscript conforming to an established style template. There may be slight differences with the audio version. Should there be any questions regarding grammar or theological content, the reader should

presume any error to be with the original speaker and should contact him directly. For full copyright, reproduction and permissions information, please visit the PHPC Copyright statement at [www.PotomacHills.org](http://www.PotomacHills.org).

**Romans 15:5-6      #CrossWords**

*“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*