

# 1 Corinthians Chapter 1

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[ 0 : 00 ] and to apply the scriptures. Now I'd like us to read a portion of scripture together now, and it's Psalm 133. Psalm 133.

Immediately, many of you will immediately know what that psalm is about, and it will make a lot of sense to us when we come later on to read 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

We started 1 Corinthians last week, and we're going to continue 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and really it's the antithesis of this psalm, sadly.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, it speaks about quite the opposite of what David sings about here. So I'd like us to read it all together out loud. If you would, please, with me, and then we'll come to worship.

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.

[ 1 : 09 ] It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion, for there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Let's come to the Lord in prayer together. Let's come and worship him. Let us pray. It's the most amazing thing, O Lord, to us, incredible, in fact, that we should be members of your family, the church of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That we should be able to call you our Heavenly Father. That we should be able to speak of you as my God, my Redeemer, my Savior.

But more than that, we thank you for the way that our Lord Jesus taught us when he taught us to pray our Father. Thank you that we are not just individuals that you have saved, but we are one people, one church, one nation.

We are one, O Lord, one flock. We are those who are branches of one vine. And, O Lord, we thank you for this incredible truth that you have united yourself to us, and us to yourself, and therefore us to one another.

[ 2 : 24 ] We thank you, O Lord, that we have been brought into this amazing and wonderful subsistence, as it were, with you, where you give to us life, where you impart to us everything that we could possibly need.

Will you, Lord, pour out from heaven into our lives grace and your Spirit and love and strength and faith and hope.

O Lord, day by day, moment by moment, O Lord, we need you and we rely upon you and we depend upon you. We thank you, O Lord, that it is true for every one of us who has been born of your Spirit, from the oldest to the youngest, from the fittest to the weakest, from the most well-educated to the most ignorant.

Lord, we are all exactly the same, that we are one in Christ. And, O Lord, we thank you that nothing in our hands can we bring, nothing can we present before you to make us somehow more acceptable, better, superior.

Lord, we thank you that the Gospel is the great leveler of humanity, and it declares all men and women are sinners, and it declares all those in Christ as children of God.

[ 3 : 39 ] O Lord, we praise you and thank you too that, Lord, you have provided for us a family, a local church, not just a place where we can meet, not just a building where we can gather, but a company of your people, brothers and sisters in Christ, those, O Lord, who are related in a relationship which is stronger than blood, a relationship which is born of the Spirit, a relationship which lasts longer than a marriage, or even a lifetime, but one that lasts for all eternity.

And there is nothing in heaven or earth or hell that can ever sever or break that relationship between believers, and between believers and Christ.

And O Lord, we ask you to forgive us, for we know that so often we do allow issues to get in the way between our relationship with you and one another.

We praise you and thank you that you have a way of dealing with us, a way of changing us and transforming us. Lord, we thank you that you are fitting us together as living stones, that we might be that spiritual house, that temple that brings praise to you.

And we thank you that the work that you do in fitting us for one another is the work of your Spirit and your Word. Be with us in this time. Help us to know, Lord, you working.

[ 5 : 02 ] Yes, Lord, perhaps you need to chip a few rough edges off us even tonight. Perhaps, O Lord, there are things that you need to challenge us about. Perhaps, O Lord, we have become separatists and individuals towards others where we need to forgive and be restored.

O Lord, in any of these ways, we ask, have your way in our midst and bring glory and praise to Jesus our Saviour. For we ask these things in and through his wonderful name.

Amen. Corinthians and chapter 1. 1 Corinthians and chapter 1. We're going to read from verse 10 to the end of the chapter.

So we did the first nine verses last week by way of introduction, introduction to who Paul was, who were the people he was writing to, and particularly we saw how Paul encouraged the believers by reminding them of all that they have in Christ, how they've been enriched in every way.

And he was doing this because he was preparing to write them a letter which was full of correction, a challenge, and transformation.

[ 6 : 16 ] And so we're going to read this next section which concerns the church and the first of the issues, first of the problems that Paul seeks to tackle in this group of believers.

So verse 10 through to verse 31. I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this. One of you says, I follow Paul.

Another, I follow Apollos. Another, I follow Cephas. Still another, I follow Christ. Is Christ divided?

Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say they were baptized in my name.

[ 7 : 24 ] Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, the intelligence of the intelligent, I will frustrate.

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those whom God has called, both Jew and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called.

[ 8 : 42 ] Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential, not many were of noble birth, but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord. We thank God for his faithful word.

Amen. And come with reverent fear to the living God, whose kingdom shall outpost the years.

Lord of the world Come on earth is Zion to dont our king's father And evil branches with still under him, God, is reigning, he is reigning here.

[ 10 : 58 ] If you would turn then to 1 Corinthians and chapter 1 and passage we read earlier. Verse 10 to verse 31 of 1 Corinthians.

The Olympics finished a few weeks ago, the Paralympics began on the weekend. And sport is there wherever you turn.

I think we were sitting at home and we could hear somebody who was very kindly sharing with us the ability to listen to their football match several gardens away.

On the radio or television. Wasn't that nice to them that we could hear everything going on in the commentary? Sport is everywhere. And in the Paralympics, GB are well represented.

They've taken part in 19 of the 22 sports available. And for some of the Paralympic sports, of course, like the Olympics, there are individual sports. Athletics, swimming particularly.

[ 11 : 59 ] Weightlifting and so on. But many of the sports are made up of teams. Wheelchair basketball. Both the men and women are doing well in that. Sitting volleyball.

I think that's the sort of volleyball I prefer. And a game called bocce. I don't know if you've heard of that. Bocce. It's just been introduced to the Paralympics. It's for very, very physically disabled people.

It's a sort of balls or balls or patank. Rolling balls. And it can be carried out by people with very limited mobility. All sorts of team games. And there are gold medals, of course, for the team that achieves the best score.

It's not the individual. There may be a very, very talented bocce player in one team. But it doesn't mean that that team will well. It's all the team. Every player together, performing at their best, wins the medal.

So it is with every sport. So it is with all things. Team work is essential. Now, when we began looking at 1 Corinthians last week, one of the things that I highlighted, and I'm sure you're well aware, is that the church in Corinth was in an awful mess.

[ 13 : 08 ] By that, I mean that there was all sorts of problems. In fact, we highlighted, and there are nine different internal problems going on within the life of the church at Corinth. It's hemorrhaging.

It's breaking apart. It is barely held together with sticky tape. And Paul is writing to address those problems. There are false teachers, of course, as there are in every single one of the letters that we look in the New Testament.

There's immorality. There's confusion. There are all sorts of problems going on. And yet, when we get to verse 10, we find that the very first problem, the very first difficulty that Paul addresses, is the one matter of disunity.

Clearly, there were many divisions.

So why did Paul begin there? Why did he begin with disunity? Why did he begin with division, rather than tackling the false teaching, or the immorality, or whatever it may be? Well, clearly, because Paul saw that as the key problem, the biggest problem, the biggest hindrance to the life of the church.

[ 14 : 19 ] He saw that unity is a necessary foundation for sorting out the remaining difficulties. Until that is laid, until there is a good foundation of unity, then all the other issues cannot be dealt with properly.

You can sort of put fires out here and there. You can stick bandages over this problem or that. But until unity is established, then all those problems will not be solved.

Not properly. Not as they should be. So disunity is at the heart of many of their other problems. Many of the other difficulties that Paul has to address later on.

When you turn to chapter 6, you find that some of them are taking others to court, suing one another. Well, clearly, a problem of disunity. Then there is the problem of those eating food sacrificed to idols, who are defiling the conscience of those who will not eat food sacrificed to idols.

There is disunity. Then we talk about the Lord's Supper, where we get a great deal of instruction concerning that in chapter 11. But again, what we're told in chapter 11, in the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you.

[ 15 : 34 ] And then, of course, we go on to things like spiritual gifts. And once more, there are divisions and disunity. So in every case, a symptom of the problem or a cause, perhaps, of the problem is lack of unity and division.

Now, this absence of unity in the church at Corinth is a real problem that is common to every group of God's people.

Throughout time, throughout history, today. In fact, one of the accusations that the world has against the Christian church is on the matter of unity.

It says things like that. If your Christian message is true, then why can't you agree with one another? Why do you fight with one another? Why are there so many denominations if this God is one and he is love?

So it's a problem for the world. And it's a problem for us. It's something that troubled Paul deeply. I appeal to you. I beg you.

[ 16 : 35 ] He sees it as being so important. It's something that breaks his heart. And it's something that keeps on occurring in other letters that he writes. Not just to the Corinthians, but the Philippians, if you remember.

Chapter 2, verse 2. Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

Make my joy complete. In other words, my joy is incomplete. There's a fly in the ointment. There's something that's spoiling my joy in Christ. And it's the disunity of that church.

So what is Paul going to do? How is he going to deal with such an ingrained problem? And again, let's be realistic. Let's look together. This is not simply a problem of the church.

It's a problem of the human heart, isn't it? For wherever we turn, in every team, in every club, in every society, wherever it is, where people are, there will always be division, disunity, falling out, separating, and so on.

[ 17 : 44 ] So it's a real issue. It's a problem that you and I will have in our hearts and minds. It is a problem that will have to be tackled. And it's one that we will have to deal with again and again and again.

So how is Paul going to do it here in this church? How is he going to make a disunited church a united church? A divided church an undivided church? Well, over the time, over history, of course, there have been attempts to unite the church.

Because it's been such a problem, because it's continued throughout the ages, since the very moment, in one sense, that Christ returned to heaven. There have been ways of tackling it.

For many hundreds of years, the Roman Catholic Church sought to enforce unity by fear and punishment. Anyone who altered in the smallest way from the church's teaching or practice was forced to change their ways or tortured or even killed.

Of course, others have sought to bring unity by very opposite means to an enforced unity. They've just said, let's let everyone do whatever they want.

[ 18 : 59 ] Let's let everyone believe whatever they like. Such is the attitude of Churches Together movement. The majority of Churches in the UK are signed up to that at this time.

The sad truth is that those who seek unity by this way have unity in name, but have huge division and differences in practice. There is no unity at all.

It's simply a mask. So it doesn't work either. Which of these two is Paul going to choose? Enforcement with harsh punishment?

Or is he going to simply say, do whatever you please as long as you smile? Well, of course, Paul isn't going to do with either of those issues in that way. He knows that unity of this sort is false and disastrous to the church.

It is not the biblical Christ-like way. And so he's going to turn to that one place, that one source of unity for all believers.

[ 20 : 05 ] He's going to turn their minds and ours to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our unity begins with him and his gospel. And for that reason, he speaks so much about Christ here in this passage.

He did that, of course, in the earlier verses. You remember, we saw again and again how Christ and Christ Jesus and the Lord Jesus Christ kept cropping up. But here we see the motivation for his appeal in verse 10.

I appear to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree with one another and there be no division. So the antidote to division is Christ.

The antidote to disunity. The antidote to hatred. Antidote to sectarianism is the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we're going to look together over this section. Here, Paul picks out several common divisions that exist in the church at Corinth, but are also present in this local church, in every local church, as well as in the society around about us.

[ 21 : 16 ] And the solution for each one of those is Christ. It's understanding the unity we have in Christ and the unity we have in the gospel. So as we look at these, dear friends, let's look at them with open minds.

Let's look at them with honesty. Let's look at them with the willingness to see that in our own hearts something of these things exists.

And let us ask the Lord, as he applies his word to us, to change us. That we might be more the people that he wants us to be.

First of all, we see clearly, and probably most famously of all, that there is a division over personality. Or personalities. Verses 12 to 13.

What I mean is this. One of you says, I follow Paul. Another, I follow Apollos. Another, I follow Cephas. As many of you will know, because you'll have a footnote, that's Peter. It's one of the other names for Peter.

[ 22 : 18 ] Still another, I follow Christ. Now this is a very deep-seated division. A deep-rooted division because it keeps cropping up as we go through the book.

Not only here in verse 12, but then in chapter 3, verse 4. For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not mere human beings?

Over into chapter 4 and verse 6. It's still going on. It's still part of the theme. Now, brothers and sisters, I've applied these things to myself and to Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, do not go beyond what is written.

Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. So there's the four chapters, all of them harking back to personality division.

That's the cause of their quarreling, we're told. My brothers, verse 11 of chapter 1, some from Chloe's household have informed me there are quarrels. So you can imagine, there's the Bible study going on, perhaps in the home or wherever it is, and there's one of them saying, well, of course, Paul said this, and he's got to be right because he's Paul.

[ 23 : 24 ] And everyone said, well, Apollos says this, and Apollos knows better than Paul. And somebody said, well, see fast Peter, you know, he's good. We don't know why they were really arguing.

It could have been some difference in their teachings. That's unlikely because they certainly were one of mind and heart. We know that Peter, when he writes in his letter about, he writes about Paul's words being scripture and hard to understand.

It could be their style of teaching. One may have been very authoritarian. One may have been much easier going. We don't know. They've been on their emphasis. Paul emphasizing justification by faith.

Peter emphasizing something slightly different. It may just be their personalities. The reality is, of course, that favorite personalities affect us all. We all warm to someone more than another.

We all have friendships with some people they find easier to get on with another. And when we read books as well, whether they be Christian books or secular books, we prefer this author, their style of writing, the subjects they talk about, how they apply them.

[ 24 : 28 ] We all have a natural tendency towards preferential thinking. But there's nothing wrong with that. But we mustn't allow it to begin to do what was happening in the church at Corinth.

There are many very good Bible teachers, preachers, pastors. There are some that we particularly feel indebted to because of the way they had an influence upon our lives. But, dear friends, what we must never do, and what the believers in Corinth were doing, is set them up as some sort of an idol, some sort of almost heroic position.

Paul here doesn't condemn personal preference or even individual expressions of taste.

But whenever these things cause us to divide from brothers and sisters in Christ, whenever these things become a passion for us, so that we are almost militant in the way that we promote the teaching of a particular pastor or particular preacher or Bible teacher or historical theologian, when we don't give room or deny room for another point of view from someone else, then we are in danger of creating severe damage within the life of the local church.

Well, how do we avoid that? How do we avoid letting preference and enjoyment, as it were, from that way of teaching and of Christian help and books and so on, how do we stop that from becoming a foolish division between us, so that we end up arguing about it?

[ 26 : 05 ] Well, simply by exalting Christ. By exalting Christ above all. Notice what Paul says in response, verse 13. Is Christ divided? Of course not.

Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No, in the name of Christ. Was Paul crucified for you? No, Christ was crucified for me. What are we doing when we're uniting ourselves to one man and his teaching?

What are we doing when we're already united to Jesus and his teaching? That's what Paul's arguing. Did this particular teacher die for us? Have we been baptized into this teacher's name so we become a disciple of his?

Do we wear his name as a logo? Well, we mustn't do. Our allegiance is to Jesus, firstly and foremostly. He died for us. We're baptized into his name. We're one with him by his spirit.

All other personalities must take second place. They must take second or third place, in fact, behind our love for brothers and sisters in Christ, who we're united with.

[ 27 : 09 ] We can discuss these things. We can even differ to agree on such things. But we mustn't divide over these things. Our unity with Christ is far, far more important than anything else.

Let's just stop for a moment. Let's ask ourselves, who is it that I particularly admire? Perhaps a Christian of the past?

Perhaps a pastor or a church leader or a writer or a theologian? Have I allowed my preference of them to get in the way of my attitude to others?

Do I look down my nose a little bit at those who read that other writer? Or those who think that other preacher is good? Have I allowed prejudice?

Have I allowed personality to get in the way? Have they actually got in the way of my love of Christ and for his people? Let us take these things to the Lord in prayer.

[ 28 : 15 ] The second area where there will be, and we'll see it later as we go through, particularly in the letter, but it's certainly a cause of problem of division in the church at Corinth, and again in all churches, is divisions over practice.

Over practice. Here in verses 14, Paul talks about baptism. I thank God I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say they were baptized in my name.

Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone, for Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel. Now Paul is talking about baptism with regard to personality division.

We can't fail to acknowledge that there are many divisions that exist within the church at large which are down to differing practices. Doing things differently. Now baptism is one.

We know that. Thank God that as a fellowship here we are able to be united in our differences on baptism. We are allowing that to become a cause for us to be at odds with one another.

[ 29 : 22 ] But there are many others as well. There are divisions over how we pray. I must pray or you must pray to God using the name thee.

We must use a certain translation of the Bible because that's the only one that's acceptable. And so are the hymns that we sing. Only those of a certain date or only those that are up to date and have a jazzy feel are the ones that we can sing.

Well you can't stand when you pray and you can't kneel when you sing. And it can go on can't it? Over and over again. We find that before long something which is done once in the life of the church becomes a transition.

It's traditional now after two years for us to have an open air service in the summer isn't it? Well we've done it for the last two years so we've got to have to do it for the next well forever aren't we? I'm just using it as an example.

I think it's great. The Bible doesn't command uniformity in these things. The Bible has given us by God's grace freedom to practice our worship of God according to our conscience before him.

[ 30 : 28 ] As long as we do not go beyond scripture. As long as we keep within the wonderful remit of the word of God. And as long as what we do we are seeking to honor him by.

Then does it matter how we dress. What language we use. What translation we read from. What songs we sing. Yes at what age we apply water for baptism.

Are these things central to the gospel? No they're not. They're not. That's what Paul is saying. What unites us is not the outward things that we do. What unites us is the work of the gospel in our hearts.

Which all of these things are on the periphery of. Do we believe and love the Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour who died for us?

Do we believe that everyone who puts their faith in him and his saving power is one with him there and with us however they've been baptized? Do we believe that every church that preaches Christ crucified as the way of salvation?

[ 31 : 28 ] Whatever music they play is a gospel church? We are free to have another way of doing things. But the truth is of course that in our minds we think that on the whole.

But don't we find ourselves again that little critical spirit coming in? Well if only they knew their Bibles better like I do then they wouldn't do it that way.

They'd do it my way. If only they had a better understanding of church history and the arguments that went on over these things. Then of course they would not do it that way but my way.

And we find that there is pride that creeps up into our hearts and minds. When we look down on another fellowship or another Christian. Because we think that we've somehow worked it all out.

Dear friends. How embarrassing it is for us isn't it? When we realise that these things are there in our hearts and lives. And Paul is speaking to the believers in Corinth and say personalities can't divide you.

[ 32 : 33 ] You're one in Christ. Practice mustn't divide you because you're all saved through the same gospel. But then we see as well and this is probably the largest section that we have.

I've put it under one umbrella. But it takes many forms and fashions. It's divisions over prejudice. Divisions over prejudice.

Verses 20 to 25 and following. Now of course one of the big divisions over prejudice which is now rearing its head again in our world is racism. Where men and women are discriminated against because of the colour of their skin.

In Paul's day of course the big problem was the Jew and the Gentile. The Jew who thought himself much better than the Gentile. The Roman of course thought himself better than everybody.

But so it is even today. Sadly it's becoming worse it seems in our own country. Not just in America where people are receiving racial abuse.

[ 33 : 38 ] Because they are Arabic of origin. Or Indian. Pakistani. Or so on. But actually there's more to that. It's not just prejudice that may be there.

But also there can be division that comes in through privileges. Privileges of education perhaps. Privileges for which we have been born into.

Our accent. Our education. Our country. We see that there with the wise and the foolish. The teacher and the student. The philosopher.

We see that again and again. That there are those who think themselves influential. But what does Paul say? Brothers think of what you were when you were called.

Not many of you were wise. Or influential. Not many were of noble birth. There's privileges. Maybe being born into a Christian home. That's an incredible privilege.

[ 34 : 33 ] Yes. But it shouldn't be a reason why we look down on those who haven't come to faith in Christ until later in life. See there are human distinctions in all of us.

Ageism is a problem isn't it? All sorts of reasons why men and women shouldn't get on with one another. Reasons why they can find to fight. In fact the truth is as we go and look again at society.

What do we see? We see men and women will fight and divide against one another over the most trivial and insignificant matters. Whether you live on the east or the west of Whitby. How foolish is that?

But it's a big problem isn't it? For some people. Whether you support Middlesbrough. Or Hartlepool.

Or Sunderland. Or Newcastle. Whether you're left handed or right handed. Whether you've got ginger hair or black hair. Whether you've got blue eyes or brown eyes. There are reasons to fight and divide again and again.

[ 35 : 33 ] But what has the gospel come to do? What has the gospel done in your life and mine? It is declared that there is in Christ one people. Neither Jew nor Gentile.

Male nor female. Slave nor free. How foolish it was for the Corinthian believers to allow those small divisions. To become big divisions.

How foolish of us to think that somehow we have the edge over others. Or we are that much up the ladder of the Christian faith.

Or that far beyond those behind us. Because of something in our background. In our lifestyle. In our parentage. See the truth is that none of those things.

Nothing in us. Naturally. Humanly speaking. Is the reason why we've been saved. Is it? You and I aren't Christians because. We are better educated than others.

[ 36 : 31 ] You and I aren't Christians because. We were born in England. We aren't Christians because. Even we were born into Christian families. We are Christians because of Christ and his grace.

We are Christians because God in his mercy loved us. And determined to save us. In fact. All that we have in the past. All the things that we might want to look back on.

Our university education. Our upbringing. Our career. Our trade. Our finances. The size of our houses. All of those things. Whatever they may be. That we've inherited and received.

All of them. Were actually hindrances. To the gospel. Remember how Peter writes to the believers. In 1 Peter. And he talks about how.

They have been rescued by Christ. From all that they had in the past. For you know that it is not with perishable things. Such as silver or gold.

- [ 37 : 28 ] That you were redeemed. From the empty way of life. Handed down to you from your forefathers. So whatever we've received. Was an empty way of life. From our forefathers.
- But you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. A land without blemish. Or defects. In the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- There's no place for snobbery. For pride. Pride over our point of view. Our practice. No pride in ourselves. In our understanding.
- In our grasp of things. In what we've done for the Lord Jesus. All that we have. We share with one another. All that we have. We have because we are in Christ.
- Christ. Notice that this is how Paul ends up. When he's gone through all these possible divisions. When he talks about all these prejudices. Whether they be racial or intellectual. Whether they be cultural.
- [ 38 : 23 ] Or whatever. He says this. It is because of him that you're in Christ Jesus. None of these things. Who has become for us wisdom from God. If you've got wisdom.
- Because God has given it to you. Because of your holiness. Is your life a life that's lived to please God. It's because God has given that to you. And are you redeemed? Are you forgiven?
- And made right with God? It's because of what Christ has done for you. Therefore the conclusion is this. That we've got nothing to boast in. Nothing to feel smug about. Nothing to feel clever about. Or proud about.
- If we're to boast. It's to be boasting in the Lord. And all that he is. And all that he's done for us. In his gospel. If we are determined to glorify him.
- If we're determined to exalt him. Then we won't have time to exalt ourselves. Or our viewpoint. Or our choice. If we're determined to follow him.
- [ 39 : 20 ] Then we shall make him our example. Closing with then these words from Philippians. In chapter 2. If you'll turn with me to them. Philippians 2. You know how the second part of Philippians 2 goes.
- Talks about Christ. His example. His humility. But notice how it leads up to that. In the teaching of Paul. Verse 1.
- Therefore if you have any encouragement. From being united with Christ. If any comfort from his love. If any common sharing in the spirit. If any tenderness and compassion.
- Are those things true of you dear friend? I hope they are. Because if you are a Christian. Then they are true of you. You have been comforted by his love. You have received of his Holy Spirit.
- You have enjoyed his tender compassion. Therefore says Paul. If that's the case. If all these things are true of each and every one of you. Then make my joy complete.
- [ 40 : 19 ] By being like minded. Having the same love. Being one in spirit. And of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Or vain conceit. Rather in humility.
- Here's the amazing thing. Rather than think well of ourselves. Value others above yourself. Instead of looking down. On someone because they do it differently. Or think differently.
- Rather value them as being better than yourself. Well. It goes against nature doesn't it? Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Or vain conceit.
- Rather in humility. Value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests. But each of you to the interests of others. If there are things that we disagree with.
- Let's seek to understand one another. Why do you see it from that way? Why do you do that? Yes perhaps it may be that they do them out of tradition. Yes it may be that they haven't thought these things through.

[ 41 : 15 ] But yes it may be I haven't thought them through. And I've just inherited that way of doing things. And so in your relationships. Verse 5. Here it is. Summing it all up.

In your relationships with one another. In the life of the local church. Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. We're to be imitators of him. And that is humility.

That is putting others above ourselves. That is true Christ likeness. Lord help us as we continue to journey through this letter. And may he help us too dear friends.

When we get to the uncomfortable bits. Like tonight. We may see that God has a better way for us. And that in that. Is blessing too. Let's close with the words of the grace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with us all. Evermore.

[ 42 : 16 ] Amen.