

I Follow Hollingsworth?

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

I pray, 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 into the name of Paul?

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius. So that no one may say you were baptized in my name.

[1 : 25] I did baptize also the house of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't 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. This is the word of the Lord. Lord, please be seated.

One of the first things we are taught in school is the pledge of allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, under God, with liberty and justice for all.

The first draft was written in 1892. A few words were changed over the years. Under God was not added until 1931 by Eisenhower, made a recommendation to Congress to say one nation under God, to ward off the threat of communism.

It was originally written as part of a movement for unity in our nation. In case you haven't noticed, unity is a paramount concern.

[2 : 44] Bellamy and others sought to put flags into every school. Then they urged every school day to begin with the pledge of allegiance. The emphasis on unity is obvious.

One nation, indivisible. It's a helpful reminder because we are, after all, the United States of America.

From the beginning, unity has been hard to maintain. The pledge reminds us that our similarities are greater than our differences. That there's a common purpose we pursue in being the United States than we could pursue on our own.

When we come to Christ, we make a similar pledge of allegiance. We turn away, as Paul famously says in 1 Thessalonians 1, from serving idols to serve the living God.

We're baptized into the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. There were other ceremonial washings, but this washing was different.

[3 : 48] Baptism in Him. We embrace Him as our Lord, one who deserves our worship and allegiance for the rest of our lives. But it's not a pledge of allegiance we make on our own.

In the same way that we recite the pledge of allegiance alongside other people, we pledge allegiance to Christ alongside others as well. I love the way Paul, look down in your Bible, he says in verse 2, reminding them of this, you're called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, you have something wonderful, but you don't have a corner on the market. Why? Because God is at work everywhere, and so we pledge allegiance together. We don't invite Jesus into our hearts as if He becomes a part of our lives, part of our profile, husband, father, brother, son, Christian.

No, He doesn't become a part of us. We become a part of Him and His church and what He's doing in the world. And when we come together, we recite the pledge, so to speak.

That's what we're doing. We're proclaiming that we don't belong to ourselves. We are not our own. We're reminding one another that we belong to the Lord.

[5 : 11] Yes, throughout the week, it sometimes feels like life is careening out of control, and yet someone has laid claim on us. That's what we're saying.

We're also reminding ourselves that we belong to each other, members of one another. Even when, and precisely when, we need this reminder when we don't feel it.

When someone drinks the last of the coffee, or steals our parking place, or worse, our seat. Didn't you know? Those seats were counter-claimed by the people last week.

When our differences seem too great, our disappointments seem too deep. When conflicts flare up, and it seems that the only option is to pick sides.

Well, these verses are a precious reminder of us. These verses were written to a church that had forgotten the pledge. After greeting them and thanking God for them, Paul turns immediately to division.

[6 : 12] This focus on division begins in verse 10, and it kind of remains the subject all the way to the end of chapter 4, calling them to see this division, and to see it in light of what God thinks, in light of the gospel.

But Paul's response to their division is brilliant. He doesn't say, toe the line. He doesn't say, shape up or ship out. He urges them to see that they've forgotten the pledge of allegiance.

They've forgotten what happened to them when they turned to Christ. They've forgotten what it meant when they were baptized into His name. They've forgotten what was true when they began following Christ.

They've forgotten their allegiance. And begun to look to others to pledge the allegiance. And there's always a long list of people inviting your pledge.

These words, though, are for us as well. This is the Word of God. It's breathed out by God. It addresses every audience as it is open. God had this audience in mind for us when these words have been 10, whether you are a follower of Christ for 10 years or two weeks.

[7 : 23] These words are a gift from God to you. They remind you. They're written to remind you of the pledge. They're written to urge you. They're written to say, let every other allegiance fall as we confess together the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let all other allegiance fall as we confess together the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. These verses call us first to the diagnosis of division. The diagnosis of division.

The apostle Paul is kind of identifying this in verse 10. Where does unity come from? Why does unity matter? What is wrong with division?

Why should unity be a primary concern for us and for the church of Jesus Christ? Look where Paul begins in verse 10. I appeal to you, brothers, that all of you agree.

Look at the end of that. He says that you be united in the same mind and with the same judgment. So it's clear that division is on the apostle Paul's mind.

[8 : 23] Now some people read this as if division is the main thing going on in Corinth. This is just a divided, nasty, faction-laden church.

Some people read it that way. I don't think that's what's going on here. It seems to me that division is just the first concern on his mind. And division is just one part of a larger concern he has for this church.

We talked about that. Not merely division, but purity is what he's after. Maturity in Christ. And so in many ways he's helping them see that they're not walking in light of the gospel.

That's the main issue and that's what we will see in just a few moments. So while he does say, I appeal to you, that there may be no more division. Stop it. Cut it out. Even though he does say he has quarrels in the next verse and later references divisions again in chapter 11 when he's talking about the Lord's Supper.

I think he gets right to the point in chapter 3 and very specific with his concern. Look up at the screen with us. He says, For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh?

[9 : 31] And behaving only in a human way. That's not talking about being somebody who's just creating the image of God, living life in this way. It's saying just in a worldly way. For when one says, I follow Paul, or another, I follow Paul, is are you not merely being human?

So that gets at the core of his concern. Not merely divisiveness, but worldliness. Not living in light of the gospel. So Paul's ultimate concern is not division in this letter.

Peace, love, and medication will not help everyone get along. There's a deeper concern. And so Paul's concern is not division.

It's ultimately that they've forgotten the pledge. They've forgotten the gospel. They've forgotten to live in light of it. They're just living like everyone else. And you can think about it this way.

Who would be surprised if they arose, arrived at this church and found it divided? Who would be surprised if you found folks talking behind one another's back?

[10 : 35] If you found folks holding grudges or withholding forgiveness? If you found cliques with exclusive relationship and exclusive outings together? Who would be surprised? No one.

Not a single soul. Why? Because that's the world we live in. Be careful.

They're biting my back too. That's the world we live in. A backbiting, divisive world. But the church is meant to be different.

I love the way Charles Spurgeon said he was speaking to his deacons at the end of a year. And talking about what God was doing. He said every year that the church has kept a united church is a year of miracle.

I don't know what the list is for your miracles. A divided church is not surprising at all. But a united church is a miracle of God. It is something that only God can perform.

[11 : 35] Only God can gather together people with all these different backgrounds. And unite them around a common purpose and allegiance to Jesus Christ. So Paul gets right to it.

This is why unity is such an important concern. And if you notice, and we saw this in Ephesians when we went through it, unity is a paramount concern for the apostle. It's one of the most neglected themes of the apostle Paul in his writing.

And why is it? Because it's so important for proclaiming to the world about the truth of God and the truth of the gospel. So Paul gets right to the point. He says, I appeal to you that you agree.

Look down there with me. That you agree. What does that mean? What does it mean to agree?

That there be no divisions, he says. That you be united in the same mind and judgment. Mind and judgment are not merely a reference to thoughts.

It includes thoughts, outlook, our way of looking at the world. We're not to be conformed to this world. We're to have the mind of Christ, as he says in a few chapters. But it does lead.

[12 : 42] It leads beyond our thoughts to our decisions, our commitments, the way we live in the world. And the church of Corinth is a long way off. If we're honest, we have ways to grow too.

We have some work to do. When he says, I urge you to be united, that's not the same word for unity that he uses in Ephesians 4. When he says, maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. He's using a word that's about the repairing of unity. It's about, it's a word used for mending a net in other parts of scripture.

It's a word used for you. It's an orthopedic word for resetting a bone. I remember as a teenager, a scuffle broke out in the house. Not that that's ever happened in any of your houses.

But it broke out between my older brother and I, 18, 17 months of difference. And so we had quite a few of these scuffles. Mom was gone. Dad was gone. He grabbed my right hand and yanked it so hard that he broke my forefinger.

[13 : 50] I called, Mom, she didn't even believe me. That's kind of, I guess some other boys, you know. Yeah, you're negotiating with terrorists, so you can't believe everything that comes out.

We finally went to the doctor. I said, Mom, yeah, I have to go to the doctor. I have a basketball game. We have to figure something out about this. And we were going into the doctor. And it was a family friend.

And we walked in. I sat down at this table. He gave me a Sharpie marker. He said, hold that for a second. Then he took it back from me. Stuck it between my two fingers and reset the first finger.

Yeah, it's a mild plane. No, I was going, ah! And Paul is kind of saying, there's some painful work to do.

When he says, be united, not merely saying, peace, love, let's all get along. He's saying, there's some fingers and some bones that need to be reset.

[14 : 53] There's some things that need to be brought back into alignment. Changes that need to be made. Relationships that need to be mended. The same is undoubtedly true about us.

We don't want as we grow and as we go along as a church that the list of people we try to avoid on a Sunday morning grows as well. Shame on us.

Why? We won't agree. We want no division. We want all the bones to be reset, so to speak. So the Apostle Paul diagnoses division.

Next, he turns to the problems of division. Division always brings a laundry list of problems. That's where the Apostle goes next. Having diagnosed division among the churches, we're alerted to these problems.

Why do things need to be put back in place? Because division creates all sorts of problems. Why can't we all get along? Well, because the problems.

[15:58] You know, the division of the problems. Notice he says, look at verse 11, that it's been reported to me by Chloe's people. And I remember several weeks ago, I said that Paul was writing to respond to a letter they wrote to him.

So actually, we're reading 2 Corinthians. He was responding to a letter. Well, he wrote a first letter. And then they responded to that letter. Now he's writing another letter. That's why it's 2 Corinthians. But this idea he was responding to a letter.

But he alerts us that he's also responding to a report he heard. Now we don't know much about Chloe's people. But the possessiveness of it seems to be that these were employees of Chloe. Perhaps Chloe had a little merchant operation in Ephesus where Paul was writing. And it's very common for people to travel back and forth because of the thriving economy of Corinth. So perhaps they were traveling back and forth and ran into the Apostle Paul.

And they said, this is what's really going on at the church. This is what wasn't included in the letter.

[17:01] He said, I hear a report that there's quarreling among the people. Quarrels is not merely kind of a spat.

We're talking about, or not merely a disagreement. We're talking about an altercation, a conflict, a clash. You know, when does a fight break out? It's not usually at a single slight. A family member leaves their shoes in the entryway one time.

Doesn't usually lead to a quarrel. It leads to a quarrel. When said family member leaves their shoes in the entryway again.

It's a crime against humanity. Somebody must speak up. Silence is violence. So we have to do something about it. So it's fist up. You know, it's quarrel time.

Same way it goes in the church, you know. Slight. Offenses. Gradually lead to quarrels. Wrongs don't usually make things right.

[18:04] Quarrels devolve into picking sides. So it seems that's what was going on in Corinth, you know. They devolved into taking sides. I follow Paul.

Look in verse 12. I follow Apollos. I follow Cephas. I follow Christ. Apparently that's the thing to do. That's why I titled this message, I follow Hollingsworth. Is that what I'm supposed to do?

I do follow him. I respect him. But not in the way they're doing it in Corinth. There's some things we need to understand to understand what is going on when the Corinthians say, I follow so-and-so.

I follow so-and-so. So the background and the response information we have on Corinth, Paul's response, lets us know that this is more than merely a quarrel leading to picking sides.

It's more than, you know, anytime you get in a fight, everybody's like, who's out of you on? You know, it's just more than that what's going on here. Corinth was resettled, as we said, as a Roman colony in 44 B.C.

[19:10] on the ancient foundations of a Greco-Roman or Greek city. It began to be dominated by Roman values. Romans were all about Romans, all about status and honor, standing in the community.

Read about men who would shave all the hair off their chest and wash themselves in oil. I mean, it sounds like a 21st century bodybuilder, but it's this status, this image, all these things.

And Corinth was built on what we call patronage. We all know nothing comes from nothing and few things come without strings attached. And so the idea was, is if you had wealth in Corinth, then you shared your wealth in order to get people to give you things, in order to have them work.

You became a patron of other people. And so if you're an artist, obviously artists are famous for being poor. And so you needed a patron, you know, you needed somebody to support you. So the idea is this patron would support you, but then you kind of owe them.

You look to them. You were dependent on them. A philosopher, a sophist, a teacher, a wise man, similar type of thing going on. And so a wealthy person was known for their entourage of people that were reporting to them, that were looking to them, dependent upon them.

[20 : 32] They were looking for their handouts, so to speak. The same thing goes on today. You find a famous person and you have all the hangers on, right? You have the entourage. You have the posse.

You have the chef. You have the financial planner, the CPA. You have personal trainers. You have bodyguards. All sorts of people looking to them.

The idea is the gifts were not gifts. It's like the mafia. The gifts were payments for loyalty. In the Godfather, if a Cadillac arrives in your front yard, you know what you must do.

You must do what you need to do. What you're asked to do. It's the same way. To some degree, what happens is money and wealth becomes just a way of securing honor and status.

A way of climbing up the rungs of a society. Sometimes our giving is not much different than that. It doesn't feel good to give or tithe to a church.

[21 : 38] Every Old Testament believer would tithe 10%. Surely after Jesus gave his life, he does not mean that we would give less. Yet it doesn't feel good to give or tithe to a church.

And few Christians do. It's not the norm even in this church anymore. But if you set up a GoFundMe or announce some specific need, many times we run to give to that need.

Giving to a GoFundMe or some specific needs feels good. It feels good to address a need. Who doesn't like to address a need? But often it feels good because it gives us an opportunity to say something about ourselves.

About our passions, our causes, our wealth. There's even a little spot we can write our name so that everyone can see how much we gave. But tithing is different.

It's more sacrificial. It's not spontaneous. It's planned. It requires self-denial and sacrifices. And no one knows what you gave. Not even your right hand.

[22 : 45] The money is given to the Lord. Financial challenges abound in these days. Equal giving is not the goal. But we all must ask when we come to a passage like this, am I honoring God with my finances?

Am I honoring God with how I give to the local church where I gather? If an unbeliever were to look at our checkbook, though no one carries those anymore, would they be shocked?

Or would they say, ah, he just spends money like I do. Would they be able to discern a difference in priority?

It's crucial. This church has been very generous over the years. We applaud that generosity.

Thankful to partner in this way. But these verses, verses like these, ask questions.

And we want to be faithful to do that for ourselves. Now, you might be thinking, what's all this got to do with the text? Well, it appears that what was going on is all this money that had created followings in Corinth.

[23 : 54] That's the way the world lives. It seems that those values just came into the church. They began to identify with Paul or Apollos or Cephas. They began to say, I'm with him.

The rivalry and factions, the status symbol laden culture began to be defined in the church. Why did they rally around these guys? Well, Paul planted.

So, Paul preached the gospel first, baptized a few people. So, surely the people that were baptized by the apostle Paul felt like they were in an exclusive camp. So, they identified with him.

Well, Apollos watered and the church began to grow under his bold preaching. Then it appears Cephas. Now, that's a reference to Peter. He's referenced four times in this book. That's a reference.

Perhaps Peter came as well. We don't have record of that. But perhaps he came as well as he did visit other New Testament churches. And so, they began to be identified with him. And so, the idea is they began to say, I follow Paul or Apollos or Cephas.

[24 : 51] Some may have not wanted to enter the phrase. So, they said, I follow Christ. I'm not with any of that stuff. We don't really know all the reasons they quarrel.

But it's clear these factions and these divisions have taken hold. It's clear they've taken sides. It's resulted in jealousy and strife, pride, and conflict.

The spiral continues downward from quarrels to different sides to division. Look what Paul said.

This is so blunt. And it's beginning to, you know, this pastorally loving, hoping you understand sort

of bluntness becomes typical of this letter.

Look down at verse 13. He says, is Christ divided? That's supposed to spring off the page. What's the response? No!

There is one Lord. Just as there's one faith. And yet, it sure looks like it. The members are strewn about.

[25 : 57] The unthinkable is happening. That's what he's saying. And he's identifying Christ with the church. And it's such a vital way, life-giving way. But he's saying, all this division, the main thing is not that we need peace and love and get along.

The main problem with it is you're dividing the body of Christ. These verses help us to see how wrong division in the church is. It's not just as unhelpful or unfruitful.

It destroys the unity that Christ gave his life to establish us as one. I remember years ago reading... Actually, it wasn't too long ago. I'm just used to saying that. It was a couple years ago reading Elizabeth Elliot's biography.

And you probably know her story. Elizabeth Elliot's husband, Jim Elliot, along with five other men, Steve Saint and Nate Saint and a few others, were speared in Ecuador proclaiming the gospel to the Waiadani people.

And you know that story. She wrote through Gates of Splendor after that and wrote dozens of books. She is a boss. She's gone to be with the Lord, but she gets it done. You know, you want a book to punch you in the face by an old lady?

[27 : 04] That's Elizabeth Elliot. Guaranteed to punch. She went back to the Waiadani people with her daughter Valerie famously.

She was there working along Rachel Saint, who was Nate Saint's sister. And they could not get along. The same people.

Trying to translate the same language. Trying to proclaim the same gospel. It was such a depressing part of the book. Backbiting and conflict, anger, speculation, sinful judgment.

Elizabeth left the field. Man, we have to guard. The unity that Christ has established.

Are you holding on to an offense? Are you carrying a grudge? One of my kids said, You're grudging right now.

[28 : 15] You're grudging right now. The other day. Are you grudging? Have you effectively shrunk down the church to the people you want?

Keeping those out who you would never go out of your way to welcome and serve. Whoa. Whoa. This is not a small thing.

Is Christ divided? He continues with these blunt questions. Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized into the name of Paul? He's alerting us to how serious it is when you say, I follow Paul or Cephas or Apollos. He's saying, You're transferring your allegiance that belong to Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to someone else.

Did they, Do they deserve your allegiance? Did they die in your place? Did they purchase the forgiveness of your sins?

[29 : 26] Picking side. It's not just unhelpful. It's disastrous. It's transferring allegiance that belongs to Jesus Christ. And so, Problems just go from worse to worse.

Offenses lead to quarrels. Quarrels leads to picking sides. Picking sides leads to division. And beneath it all, in the end, is a transfer of allegiance from Christ to worldly men.

They've forgotten the pledge. Finally, these verses draw our attention to the solution to division. The solution to division.

The diagnosis of division. The problem of division. But division needs a solution. The solution to the division is right here. But look at the way the Apostle Paul dives into this.

You know, I was thinking about this book this week. Thinking about Corinthians. And we are going to be in here for a little bit. But one thing you can rest assured on with the book of Corinthians, it's going to be interesting. Every week. Because it's such an interesting book.

[30 : 36] Head coverings and all sorts of spiritual gifts. Tongues. Prophecy. Interpretation. It's all there. It's going to be interesting. You may not like the sermons, but at least they'll be interesting. Right?

And so, you see that immediately. The Apostle Paul says, I thank God that I baptized none of you except Christmas and Gaius. Now, Paul thanks God for many things in his letter, but this is the most surprising and even a bit disturbing.

Paul, why would you thank God that you only baptized those two? Didn't the Lord command you to go to proclaim the gospel, to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Well, Paul immediately tells us why. Look at verse 15. So that no one may say that you are baptized in my name. He didn't want his baptism of them to lead to more division among them.

He did not want his baptism to become canon fodder, and I'm sure we've never seen the words or actions of a political leader being taken out of context and being used to say something very different.

[31 : 46] And so Paul was thankful. He said, because if he baptized anyone, it was not so that they could run around saying, I follow Paul. After this, you know, verse 16, it's an aside there.

I mean, the text is, there's no parentheses. But it's in parentheses because it seems like a parenthetical thought. Paul remembers that he did baptize someone else.

I mean, it's almost like, you know, come to think of it, upon further review, as they say in the NFL, I did baptize Stephanas. I love, how natural that sounds, baptized the household of Stephanas.

But avoiding more division is not the only reason he was glad he did not baptize more. He continues, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel. Now this statement in many ways becomes thesis for the next, I don't know, until the end of chapter 2.

And so, I can't preach all those messages right now, but it's loaded with Old Testament significance. In and throughout the book of Isaiah, Isaiah foretold of someone who would bring the good news.

[33 : 09] How beautiful are the feet of him who preaches the good news. And so Isaiah 40, go up on a high mountain. Why? Comfort my people, comfort my people. Go up on a high mountain, O herald of good news. Lift up your voice with strength.

Why? Because the Lord, our God, is coming with might. And so the apostle Paul is saying, when he uses this word very specifically, he is saying, he is ushering the good news of him who has come and brought salvation through his life, death, and resurrection.

The Lord, Jesus Christ, writing from Ephesus, this same period of time, Paul explains further about this good news, what it means.

What is this good news? He says, how then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him of whom they've never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

And how are they to preach unless they are sent as it is written? That's Isaiah 52. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news? So faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ.

[34 : 14] What the apostle Paul is saying when he references this, he knows that his calling at its core was not to share his opinion. You're not entitled to the apostle Paul's opinion. It wasn't to give counsel.

It wasn't to offer direction. It wasn't even to baptize. It was to preach the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the town crier, the herald, who stands on the hill and says, God has done something for sinful humanity by sending his son to rescue and to save.

In the Roman world, it's very common for announcements to go out to the empire of good news, of good things happening throughout the empire. So if another heir was born or a marriage or the end of a war, you'd send out a declaration, a statement to be read.

Well, there is a declaration that has been entrusted to the apostle Paul, been entrusted to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The declaration is Christ dies for guilty sinners that they would never experience his wrath.

and so this is the good news. It's our message. It's what we proclaim. It is foremost of why we exist.

[35 : 26] And the good news is Christ was crucified for you. I love that that is the summary of the gospel in these verses.

The cross on which the Prince of Glory died is not primarily an act of humiliation. Now, it is humiliating that God, the Son incarnate, would become flesh and would bear the scorn and ridicule. It's not primarily, though, an act of shame, of enduring shame, of enduring ridicule and spectacle. It's not primarily, the cross is not primarily an act of selflessness that he came and did this. Selflessness, greater love has no one than this that lays down their life. It's not primarily this act of selflessness. The cross is primarily an act of sacrifice. That's what the Apostle Paul is saying.

Christ was crucified for you. Why? Because without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. The bulls, rams, goats forgave sins.

[36 : 33] for a little time, but God has done the unthinkable, all the sin that demanded a penalty, demanded a payment before the just judgment seat of God.

Christ has put, or God has put Christ forward to pay the penalty, to undertake the judgment, to bear the wrath that we were unescapably and irrevocably destined to face, to bear away the guilt of sin of those who trust in Him forever.

You want to know what the cross is? As one Scottish minister said, what is the cross? What is the cross? It is damnation. It is the damnation that you deserve, that I deserve, because of the cosmic treason that has marked my life from day one, demanding my own way, insisting on what I want, pushing God off the throne of worship and obedience and allegiance and reasserting myself time after time after time.

The good news of the gospel is that Christ was crucified for you. Anyone can get in on this. That's why the word of the gospel, really, the word of the gospel is regardless of how far off you are this morning, how separated you feel from God, about how bad your week was, what is your background.

[38 : 12] This good news is for anyone. You know, sometimes there's so many messages that are not for anyone, you know. Not anyone gets to do this or that in our culture, but this good news, this unthinkably great news is for anyone and everyone.

And so, in the last analysis, what the apostle Paul is saying when he says he did not come to baptize but to preach the gospel, he's saying, it is not waters that save. You cannot, you don't have to be baptized to be saved, nor is it wisdom or the polish of a preacher.

It's not the eloquence of a preacher that gets saved. After all, there's lots of lousy preaching that saves people from wrath. No, it is the word alone that you need to be saved to be rescued from the wrath you deserve.

So flee the wrath and run to Jesus Christ. There's room enough. But the gospel is also the solution to the division. Encapsulated in that phrase, the apostle Paul, alerting them to the pledge to why we're together.

Sometimes we need that reminder, why am I together with these people? It's not so that we, you know, you hang out with people and you start talking the same way or you start dressing the same way, start looking the same way, you know.

[39 : 29] Every family starts looking the same way. That's not why we're together so that we start looking the same way, you know. We're together because Christ has plucked us out and called us together to be a united church that proclaims the gospel to a watching world.

Filled with people with differences. We don't want differences to decrease, I want them to increase. Don't dress like me or other people. We want to be a place where unity is not its counterfeit uniformity.

Everybody toes the line. Unity is not uniformity. Unity is differences aligned together with a common allegiance to Christ.

Guarding it and protecting it with all their heart. Ridding their heart of these offenses. watching their hearts. Why?

For this unity that God has established and God has created. So let every other allegiance fall as we confess together the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[40 : 42] We must not forget the pledge when George P. Schultz served as Secretary of State for the United States of America. He would invite every newly appointed ambassador.

we have ambassadors all throughout the world to his office for a meeting when they began this post. He would spend the globe in his office and say ask the ambassador to point to his or her country.

He said every time the new ambassador would point to the country where he was sent. Schultz would correct the ambassador and say no your country is the United States of America.

Don't ever forget it. What is the apostle doing here? He's saying you have a pledge. You have a savior.

You're not your own. You belong to the Lord. You belong with one another but you also belong to that true country. You're an outpost of heaven as Taylor said. You're an outpost proclaiming that there is news of a better country further on up the road where God will be with his people

uninterrupted and unmediated forever and ever.

[42 : 03] Don't forget the pledge. Don't forget your country. Let us not forget the gospel. Father in heaven thank you for these few minutes to consider your word to humble ourselves before you.

thank you for this striking call to us as a body.

Lord we pray anything unhelpful would be forgotten but everything that drives us further into Christ and into lives of one another would be would have its intended effect.

Lord continue your work we pray let us not be a church that's riddled with offenses or settles for unity's counterfeit let us be a church that remembers the pledge and remembers our Savior we thank you in Christ's name Amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com Amen.