

# Keep the Heid

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[ 0 : 00 ] And we're going to turn to God's Word, to the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, which you will find in page 952 of the Bible in your seat. 952, and we will read the full chapter together.

Let us hear then the Word of God. Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and hers.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him, in all speech and in all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 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 may be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people, that there is quarrelling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Kephas, that is Peter, or I follow Christ.

[ 1 : 48 ] Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptised none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say you were baptised in my name.

I did baptise also the household of Siphanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptised anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly 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, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom.

It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs, and Greeks seek wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and folly to Gentiles.

[ 2 : 54 ] But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful. Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. So that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, and our righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Let us pray. Make the book, live to me, O Lord. Show me thyself within thy word.

[ 4 : 02 ] Show me myself, and show me my saviour, and make the book, live to me, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Whether you've stayed in Glasgow all of your life, or you've only been here for a short period, I'm sure you already know that Glasgow is a city that is absolutely passionate about its football. And I'm sure you know that Glasgow is the home to two great football teams, Celtic, and Celtic Reserves. I'm only joking, it's home to both Celtic and Rangers football clubs. And last season, saw these two great rivals face each other an unprecedented seven times, in the league, the League Cup, and the Scottish Cup, which went to a replay.

Now these games are always fiery, but the Scottish Cup replay tie between them was particularly so. Three players were sent off, Rangers players, ten players were given yellow cards, the referee was manhandled, and even the coaches were squaring up to one another on the touchline.

Now friends, there are many qualities required to make it as a professional football player, but playing in a Celtic Rangers match is different from playing in any other game. And I'm sure if you had to ask any seasoned supporter, or any ex-old firm player, what is the biggest quality that a player must possess in order to be a success in the hostile environment of an old firm match?

[ 5 : 32 ] I am sure that they wouldn't say ball control, although ball control is very important. Nor I'm sure would they say timing or tackling ability. Again, these things are very important.

And I'm sure, nor would they say passing ability or great individual skill. All of these things are important. But I'm sure that if you had to ask any ex-old firm player, what is the single biggest quality that you must possess in order to make it in a Celtic Rangers match?

I am sure that they would tell you it's the ability to keep the heat. The ability to keep the head. The ability to remain calm under pressure. Not to be sucked in by the crowd or the atmosphere of the occasion.

But to be able to keep the head. And that was the problem in the Scottish Cup replay time. Too many of them lost the head. And friends, if it's important in the hostile environment of an old firm match to keep the head, then how much so for us, the Church of Jesus Christ, to keep the head in the hostile environment that is the world?

And reading through 1 Corinthians, we discover the Apostle Paul was writing to a church that had lost the head. Christ's name is mentioned no fewer than nine times in the opening nine verses.

[ 6 : 51 ] And it's clear that Paul is indicating to this group of believers that the reason that they're in such a mess was they'd lost all focus of Christ's headship and authority. Although the letter reveals the church at Corinth still met together for things like communion and general worship, they were simply going through the motions.

just as many do in churches every week. People meeting in church buildings but without giving any consideration or thought whatsoever to the headship and authority of Christ.

If Christ's headship isn't recognized in a church or a denomination, then the body of that church or the denomination will no longer be recognized by God and it will inevitably fall apart.

On several occasions in his letter the Apostle Paul takes up this theme that Christ is the head of the church and in him the whole body is joined and held together. Perhaps the reason why many churches and denominations dwindle and die is they've lost focus of this and they've tried to replace Christ with people.

The passage that we're going to focus in this afternoon is 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 10 to 31 and I want to draw three consequences that take place within a church when Christ's headship is lost.

[ 8 : 05 ] Firstly, it will lose its unity among its people verse 10 to 17. Secondly, it will lose its message verse 17 to 25 and thirdly, such a church will lose its memory verse 26 to 31.

That is, its people will forget the wicked state that God found them in and they will forget that it's only by the grace of God that they've been saved. Lose its unity, lose its message and lose its memory.

So let's look at each of these. A church that loses focus of Christ's headship will lose unity among its people. There's nothing more tragic than seeing a group of people divided who have got so much to unite them.

Recently in Scotland, the Scottish Socialist Party who seemed more united than any other political party were publicly shamed as their former leader went through a perjury trial at Glasgow High

Court.

This group who at one time had so much in common and so much to unite them one by one appeared on TV to slag each other off. It was a pathetic and pitiful sight.

[ 9 : 14 ] Even more tragic than this is what a group of Christians do likewise to brothers and sisters in Christ. In chapter 1 verse 2 Paul tells the Corinthians they are a group of people sanctified in Christ and called to be holy.

In verse 9 he reminds them they have been called into fellowship with Christ and with each other. In light of such a calling the last thing they ought to be doing was dividing themselves into factions and cliques all doing their own thing.

Yet this was exactly what was happening in Corinth. Think of Paul as he wrote this letter. He must have looked back to when he planted the church at Corinth and the joy that he saw in the faces of the new converts who for the first time knew God's love and for the first time knew that in Christ they were forgiven and free of their sin.

In Acts chapter 18 it tells us that a whole household at that time believed in the Lord and were baptized. These must have been happy times for there's nothing better than seeing a life changed by Jesus.

But fast forward a few years and here we have the same group of believers divided and quarreling among one another. In verse 10 we get a sense of how this broke Paul's heart for he appeals to his brothers that in the name of Christ they all agree so that there be no division among them and so that they may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

[ 10 : 38 ] One of the things that this chapter reveals there is a church whose people are not united end up putting people in a position ordained for God alone and we see this in verse 12 where some followed Paul some followed Apollos some followed Kephas that is Peter while still others followed Christ.

Now it's bad enough when a church has two warring factions but the Corinthians excelled they had four. The Gentile believers well they followed Paul we follow the guy who planted the church. The Jewish converts we follow Peter we follow the guy who was with Jesus during his earthly ministry and perhaps some of the intellectuals chose Apollos due to his eloquent preaching that we can read of elsewhere.

And to top it all off we have a group who thought they were spiritually superior to the rest who boasted they were of Christ. All of these groups were in the wrong. Paul makes this clear in verse 13 by asking is Christ divided?

They were behaving like Christ himself had been had been cut up into sections and parceled out to each factions. They'd lost sight of the one thing that united them namely Christ.

[ 11 : 50 ] Now friends these divisions were not over the gospel or doctrine these divisions were about hero worship something that we too can easily fall into in a world of internet sermons and blogs we can so easily elevate men to a position that they don't deserve and is not helpful for us.

I witnessed this myself a couple of years ago I was in America and I was at a conference for Christian pastors and there was three speakers and each one of them was notable household Christian names and as I say it was for Christian pastors some 1500 pastors and at the end of every session these Christian pastors would surround one of these one of the speakers in particular I won't name him but they would surround one of these guys in particular they were asking him to sign their Bibles I know you didn't write it but I sure wish you did I'm going to name my kid after you one day I don't care if it's a girl I'm going to call her after you it was horrible to witness and this Christian pastor he looked really uncomfortable with the whole thing but us being Glasgow boys we wanted to make sure and we went down and we asked could we have a photograph taken with him and Ewan Dodd positioned himself on the right hand side I positioned myself on the left and Richard Henry he got ready to take the photograph and while we were getting ready to take the photograph with this Christian pastor who'd be receiving all this hero worship I just threw my arm round him and I said can I just say what a privilege this is for you

I'm not even sure if you understood a word I said but friends hear what I'm saying I'm not saying we've not to have our favourite preachers I've got mine and I'm sure you've got yours but this had went right beyond having a favourite preacher it went right into idolatry and was dividing the church friends we always need to remember that even the best of men are men at best the Corinthians had become a body without a head and it doesn't take a medical professor to work out that if that's the case then the body will not stand when the headship of Christ is lost in a church its people fall apart

and so too does their unity the second thing that chapter 1 reveals if a church loses its focus of Christ's headship it will lose its message verse 17 to 25 and this appears to be what happened at Corinth which is why from verse 17 onwards Paul goes on to emphasise the importance of the gospel the Corinthians were happy to draw dividing lines through the church as we've already seen in verses 10 to 17 but in these verses here

Paul reminds them that the real dividing line is not through the church but around the church between the church and the world and taking their eyes off Christ the Corinthians inevitably drifted from the message of Christ which Paul says in verse 18 is the power of God to those who are being saved friends I want to just stop and take a minute to look at verse 18 for it contains such amazing truth truth the church needs to be reminded of time and time again we're told the word of the cross that is the message of Christ death burial and resurrection and what it signified and accomplished is the means by which God either brings someone to know him or to become hardened against him the message of the cross is so powerful that it divides all humanity into two categories the perishing and the saved and friends every person in here this afternoon without exception falls into one of these two categories we're either perishing and looking at a lost eternity in hell or we're saved and friends we owe it to ask ourselves before we leave this bold in the day which category we're in are we perishing those who resist the gospel or are we saved those who submit to it the gospel message of the cross is a joy for the saved believer but for the perishing unbeliever it is unpopular it is offensive and it's politically incorrect it's unpopular because it tells us we need to change and folks by nature we don't want to hear this it's offensive because it says we all need forgiveness for our sins which are committed against God and friends this confronts us with the fact that we're not as good as we might think we are and again none of us wants to hear this the gospel is also politically incorrect because it is clear that the change and the forgiveness that we all need it can't come by multi-faith groups and world religions saying that all roads lead to God instead the message of the cross says change forgiveness salvation hope joy and peace with God comes by Jesus Christ alone whose broken body and spilled blood is the only thing that will make God accept us friends this is the Christian message and it's an absolute travesty when churches turn from this and lose confidence in it and friends this has affected the Christian church all the way through the history of the church Bishop Ryle writing in a previous generation said this the longer I live the more convinced I am the world needs no new gospel as some profess to think I am thoroughly persuaded the world needs nothing but a bold full unflinching teaching of the old paths the old paths you'll know that this church went through a refurbishment program a few years ago and as a result of that the church has opened every day from 10 o'clock through to 4 o'clock and we have a team of volunteers manning the building showing people about the building and sharing the gospel with them and one day I was on duty and I was on duty with Ruth who's playing the piano today and I overheard

[17:47] Ruth speaking to someone and it really warmed my heart to hear what Ruth said she said to the person she said yes you will see that there's much in this building that's new and modern but it is an old message that we proclaim a bold full unflinching teaching of the old paths tell me the old old story tell me the old old story tell me the old old story of Jesus and his love that's what all our churches need a bold full unflinching teaching of the old paths friends not all churches agree with this some act like the gospel's hid its day and they try to replace the gospel with things that they think will make the Christian faith more interesting and acceptable they convince themselves the way to get more people into churches to spice up the church a little with lots of contemporary ideas and so as we see church people get more excited about some converted gangster who will give his testimony about how bad and immoral he was or the latest converted celebrity who's booked for a fee to come and entertain crowds on a Sunday morning with rubbish stories for the entertainment industry all the while the gospel message of

Christ crucified the power of God is put on a shelf and we wonder why church numbers are going down and why we see so little of God's power moving in our lives and in our communities a friend told me of an article he read in his local newspaper can you believe it it read a church needs an initiative to make its place of worship more interesting to people what could be more interesting to dying men than there being a cure what could be more interesting to condemn sinners than a saviour to take their place my good friend Dorothy Campbell bought me this book it's called Atonement and it's got chapters written by a few contributors and every chapter of the book is worth the price of the book and one of the chapters is written by your good friend Alistair Begg and the

chapter is entitled Preaching the Cross and here's what Begg writes without the cross of Jesus Christ there is no gospel there simply is no good news without the cross indeed any attempt to preach the gospel minus the cross is to offer people a placebo rather than the very medicine that they require to be sure in the taking of the placebo they may feel that it has done them some good but if we have not really explained to them the meaning and purpose of the cross then we have neither convinced them of their problem nor have we been able to convey to them the biblical solution how can

God pardon sinners without encouraging sin how can he simultaneously show justice and punishment but mercy and pardoning how can he turn his enemies into his friends and bind them to him in eternal love how can he admit men and women into heaven without spoiling the holiness of heaven the answer to all of these questions is found in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ as foolish as it seems to those who are perishing to those who are being saved it's the very power of God as our text demonstrates friends when we lose focus focus of Christ's headship we subsequently lose the only message we have the message of the cross if we don't preach this message what else will we preach to those who come through the door will we tell them stories to please them so that they're not offended and and might remain with us a little longer will we stop telling people they must repent and throw themselves upon the mercy of Jesus

Christ or else be lost forever so that they might like us a little better friends a church without the message of the cross and the pulpit is not a church in the eyes of God but friends what about us publicly are we ashamed of the cross Jesus says if we're ashamed of the cross then he'll be ashamed of us when he comes with the angels and all his father's glory friends I don't know about you but sometimes I get ashamed of the cross and there's usually two things that make me ashamed are at the root of me being ashamed rejection and ridicule I always like to fit in I like to be lying be one of the boys but I know sometimes that if I share the message of the cross people will reject me they won't want to know me anymore or secondly they'll ridicule me they'll make fun of me they'll think they'll call me a bible basher they'll say I'm a head case all sorts of things they'll make fun of me but friends see when I'm ever tempted to get into these two things always think of the reward the Lord

Jesus Christ says that if I'm prepared to name him before men he'll be prepared to name me before the angels when he comes in his father's glory so friends there's going to be no doubt this week opportunities for you to share the gospel and as soon as the opportunity arises 50 reasons are going to come into your head why you shouldn't share the gospel and at the root of him usually will be rejection and ridicule but I want to encourage you think of the reward the Lord Jesus Christ going to name you before the angels when he comes in all his father's glory Charles Spurgeon said when we preach Christ crucified we have no reason to stammer or stutter or hesitate or apologize there is absolutely nothing in the gospel for which we have any cause to be ashamed friends let's be like the apostle Paul who told the Romans he wasn't ashamed of the gospel for it's the power of God for all who believe that's why I'm sure the apostle Paul decided decided to know nothing amongst the Corinthians except

[ 23 : 36 ] Christ and him crucified friends let's never stop preaching the cross so we can live peaceful lives in our communities and so that church numbers might go up they won't Martin Luther said this whenever the true message of the cross is abolished the anger of hypocrites and heretics eases and all things are in peace this is a sure token the devil is guarding the entry of the house and that the pure doctrine of God's word has been taken away friends are our lives nice and cozy if they are there's a good chance we've stopped mentioning the message of the cross which is a stumbling block and a rock of offense to those who are perishing those who will despise us for proclaiming such a message the final thing I want to look at this chapter is the third consequence of losing focus of Christ's headship it will make us lose our memory and forget ourselves many within the church at Corinth were proud and arrogant seeing themselves as being some among some spiritually elite group they did what all of us are tempted to do after God has found us and cleaned us up they started to think they weren't really that bad after all which made them lose appreciation of

God's free gift of grace in Christ in verse 26 Paul reminds them to think of what they were when they were called not many of you were wise by human standards not many were influential not many were of noble birth in chapter 6 we get more details about the former life of the Corinthians the Apostle Paul writes neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor prostitutes nor

men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and he concludes by saying and such were some of you the Corinthian church comprised of immoral greedy law-breaking drunkards who had no position no power and no pedigree it's in view of such a low social standing it becomes all the more absurd they had become proud and now believed they were amongst some spiritually elite group friends that was them what about us what has God saved us from what's in our closet do we acknowledge that when God found us we were hell deserving sinners and that the only way we would get to heaven is by

God's free grace or have we deceived ourselves into thinking that before knowing Jesus we weren't really that bad if God was to show us every thought word and deed we've ever done and if it was revealed to us not only what was in our hearts before becoming Christians but what's come to this office since we'd be thoroughly ashamed and we'd never want to see each other again Paul can say to all believers not just the Corinthians and such were some of you for this reason he ends chapter one by reminding us all that there's no place for boasting within the Christian church for only in Christ are we called out of darkness into light in verse 27 to 29 Paul writes God chose the foolish things of the world the Corinthians and us to shame the wise God chose the weak things of the world the Corinthians and us to shame the strong he chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things and the things that are not to nullify the things that are why so that no one may boast before him friends no one will ever stand before God saying how good they were or how good they've done again to quote Luther he rightly said we're all just beggars showing other beggars where to find bread the only righteousness holiness and redemption we can boast about Paul says in verse 30 is in Christ as someone put it many years ago the only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that we bring that should keep us humble so friends to conclude in all that we've looked at this afternoon Christ is the head of the church if we keep this in heart and mind we won't meet the three consequences the

Corinthians experienced we won't lose our memory instead we'll we'll keep in mind what and who we were when God found us and this will produce continual thanksgiving and gratitude towards him in our hearts secondly we won't lose our message we'll stick to the message of Christ crucified the message that saved us and changed us a message we know will always be foolishness to those who are perishing but to those who are being saved it's the very power of God and thirdly we won't lose our unity we'll be a collective body called by God into fellowship with son to the praise of his glory and the world will look on and buy our love for one another they will know that we are Christ's disciples you