

Unity is Worth It

Ephesians 3:1-13 – NCBC, July 24th, 2022

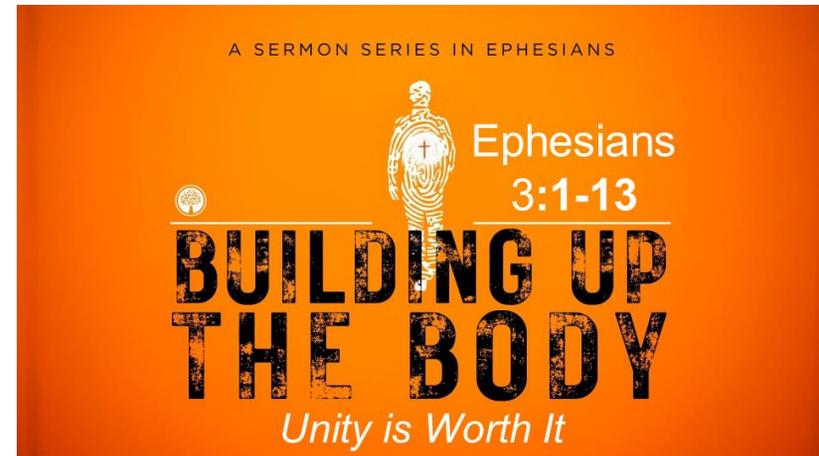
Main Point: Christian unity is worth it no matter the cost.

Outline:

- I. **The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)**
 - a. Unity requires sacrifice for Jesus (v. 1b)
 - i. Because we belong to Him
 - ii. Because we are controlled by Him
 - b. Unity requires sacrifice for others (vv. 1c-3)
 - i. By sharing the truth (v. 1c-3a)
 - ii. By explaining the truth (v. 3b-6)
- II. **The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)**
 - a. Unity Showcases God's gospel (vv. 7-9)
 - i. By showing His power (v. 7a)
 - ii. By showing His wealth (v. 7b)
 - iii. By showing His plan (v. 8-9)
 1. The undeserved honor (v. 8)
 2. The undeserved impact (v. 9)
 - b. Unity Showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)
 - i. By showing His wisdom (v. 10)
 - ii. By showing His purpose (v. 11)
 - iii. By showing His blessings (v. 12-13)
 1. Our relationship to Him (v. 12)
 2. Our new status in Him (v. 13)

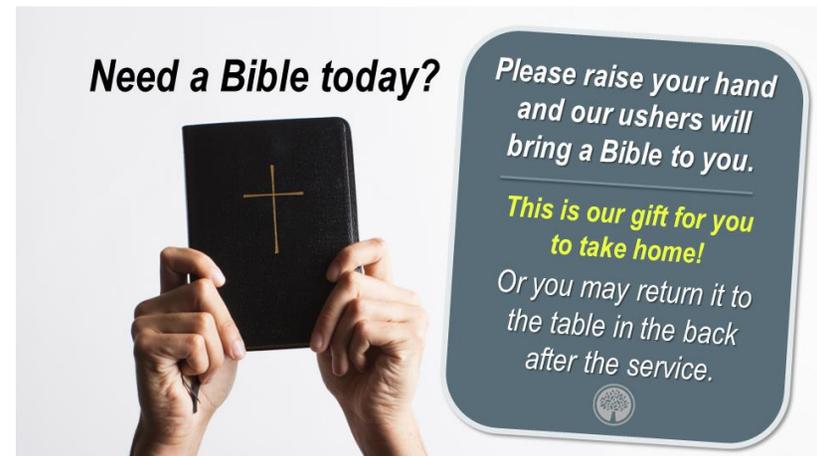
Application: Count the cost and rejoice in the glory.

I. SBTS

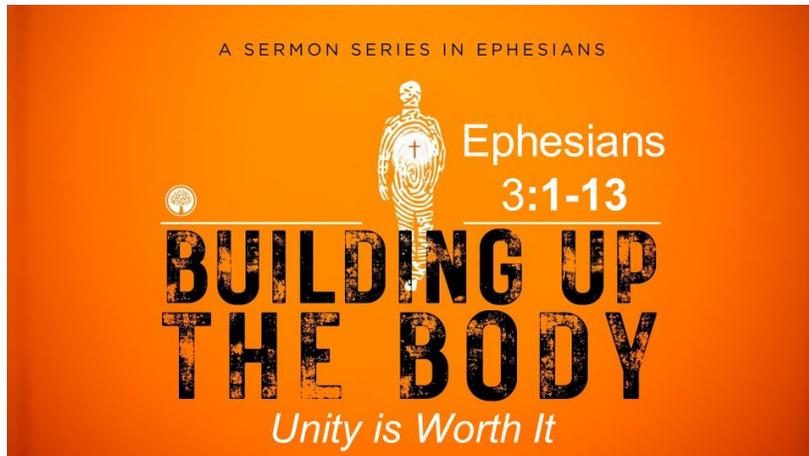


[MAIN TITLE Slide] If you would, please open your Bibles with me to Ephesians chapter 3.

[Usher/Bible Slide] If you do not have a Bible with you, simply raise your hand as our ushers come by.



II. Introduction



[MAIN TITLE Slide] Do you know what a “watershed moment” is? It’s an event that shapes and changes the course of history. The invention of the Gutenberg printing press in 1436, the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the liberation of slaves through the Emancipation proclamation in the 1860s, the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942, the terrorist attack on the World Trade center on September 11th, 2001. These are just a few watershed moments throughout history.

But the greatest watershed moment of all history was the birth, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That event changed the course of history, of all humanity, and has altered the way people live now and for all eternity.

¹ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians*, vol. 25 of *Boice Expository Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 97.

Part of the impact on humanity was the fundamental change in relationship between Jews and the rest of the world - the Gentiles.

The past two Sundays, Pastor Kevin has walked us through Ephesians 2 and helped us understand how Jesus removed the division that existed between Jews and Gentiles.

What was the cause of division? Let me give you a brief reminder.

All the way back to Genesis 12, God had chosen to make a nation out of one man, Abraham, that would become His special people Israel. They were to remain separate and distinct from the rest of the world through civil, ceremonial, and moral laws given to them by God.

From the time of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt up through the time of Jesus life, almost 2,000 years, Israel existed with a God-ordained system of religious segregation based on ethnicity. You had to be an Israelite to be able to worship God.

And even though Gentiles were allowed to worship God, those who did had to become Jewish externally and were not able to share the fullness of the same privileges as Israel.

Because of this, Israel was tempted toward pride based on their ethnic, national, and religious identity.

Israelites looked down on Gentiles and the Gentiles returned the favor. The Greeks themselves viewed every non-Greek person as a barbarian.¹

So you can imagine the hubbub that was created when it was revealed that Jesus' death ended this Jew-Gentile division! Anyone in the world who put their trust in Jesus was now given the exact same privileges as the Jew.

For the Jew and Gentile Christians, there was resentment and bitterness to work through. There were theological differences to work through. Though they knew that they were now united together in the church through Christ, they had to wrestle with what it looked like to live together in harmony.

This was so hard that even the apostles struggled with it. In Galatians 2 we learn that the apostle Peter didn't want his Jewish friends to seem him hanging out with Gentiles and Paul had to confront him on that.²

Even though we are far removed from the Jew-Gentile division historically, churches today are still threatened by division all the time.

Division can happen because of sin. Our pride and selfishness can divide us. We sin against each other. We are tempted to withhold forgiveness and harbor bitterness.

Division can even come from non-sinful issues. It can happen over differences in preferences like worship music styles. Division can occur over differences in theology. New Castle is not immune to these threats.

In order to maintain unity in a church there is always a cost. That cost involves sacrifice and sometimes suffering.

The question we need to answer is this: "Is it worth it?" "Is church unity worth the cost?" Couldn't Paul just have started a church for Jewish Christians and church for Gentile Christians? Do we need to

work through our differences and get along? Isn't it easier if we just have church for contemporary music and one for traditional music? Isn't it better if we have churches where everyone agrees about every single theological issue?

In our passage this morning, Paul answers the question "What's the cost and is it worth it?"

So if you are able, please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word as I read from Ephesians chapter three, verses one through thirteen.

"1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory."

² Gal. 2:11-21

This is the reading of God's Word. You may be seated. **Let's pray.**

Main Point



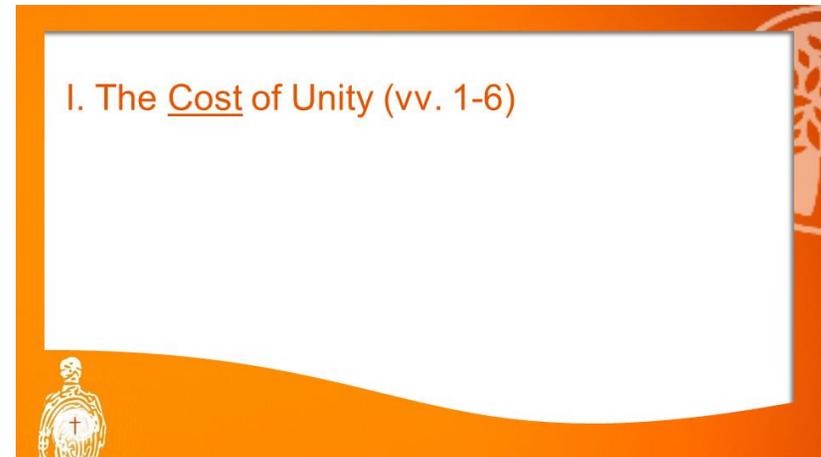
**Christian unity is worth it
no matter the cost.**

[MAIN POINT SLIDE] Is church unity worth the cost? **The main point** of this passage is this: Unity in the church is worth it no matter the cost.

As we walk through this text this morning, we will see that Paul explains the cost and the worth of unity in the church so that we won't lose heart when we suffer for it.

III. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)



[POINT #1 SLIDE] The first thing Paul does for us is explain the costs of unity in the church. In verse one Paul writes, *“For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles –“*

The phrase *“for this reason”* refers back to what he just finished talking about at the end of Ephesians chapter 2. Because Gentiles are now equal and united together in Christ, Paul wants to pray that God will help the believers preserve that unity.

But his prayer doesn't start until verse 14 because he suddenly breaks into a great big ol' digression. You probably have a big hyphen in your Bible which shows the beginning of a long parenthetical thought – a side note – that begins in verse 2 and goes through verse 13.

Jump down the page and look at verse 14 real quick. It picks back up with Paul's original train of thought, *“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father.”*

You know how you can go into the store with the goal of buying one thing, but then walk out with several other things because you

walked past and thought “oh I need this too.” That’s kind of what is happening here with Paul.

I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- Unity requires sacrifice for Jesus (v. 1b)

[SLIDE 1A] What did he say that triggered his tangent? It was when he described himself as a “*prisoner of Christ Jesus.*” Paul describes himself this way to remind the Gentiles that there is a cost to unity – **that unity requires sacrifice for Jesus** - a cost that should lead us all to bow in prayer for help.

As Paul was writing this letter he was a literal prisoner in Rome because of Jewish opposition to the message he proclaimed - that Jews and Gentiles were equal and united in the church because of what Jesus did on the cross.

By all outward appearances Paul was a prisoner of Rome, but he doesn’t see it that way. He has a far greater perspective. Paul wasn’t in prison because of Rome, he was ultimately in prison because of Jesus.

³ 1 Cor. 6:20

I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- Unity requires sacrifice for Jesus (v. 1b)
 - Because we belong to Him

[SLIDE 1A “belong to Him”] Paul viewed his sacrifice as for Jesus **because we belong to Him.** It doesn’t matter what others may do to us on earth, we never cease to be Jesus’ possession. Scripture teaches us that we belong to Jesus because he bought us for a price – the price of His blood.³

I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- Unity requires sacrifice for Jesus (v. 1b)
 - Because we belong to Him
 - Because we are controlled by Him

[SLIDE 1A “controlled by Him”] We also sacrifice for Jesus

because we are controlled by Him. As His prisoner, as His possession, we are subject to His plans and purposes. We are not free to do as we please, we are called to do what pleases Him!⁴ We sacrifice for Jesus because we are controlled by him. Paul was compelled by Jesus to proclaim the gospel that would cause his suffering.

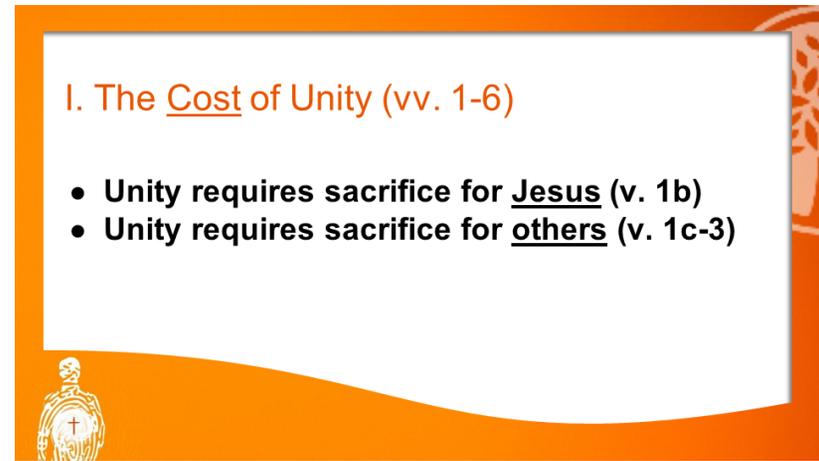
This is such a fascinating description because it gives us a greater perspective on difficulties we encounter. When we face threats to division it's tempting to either dig our heels in because of pride and selfishness, or flee the scene because of fear or laziness.

But when we see that the **cost of unity is sacrifice for Jesus**, it removes the “victim” mentality. As one commentator put it:

“Perspective is all-important. How we view and react to circumstances is more important than the circumstances themselves. If all we can see is our immediate situation, then our circumstances control us.”⁵

Instead of the situation being about me and what I want, it's now about Jesus and what he wants – it's about worship and glorifying Him. That's a cost we should be willing to pay.

⁴ 2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Cor. 10:31; Matt. 28:19-20



I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- Unity requires sacrifice for Jesus (v. 1b)
- Unity requires sacrifice for others (v. 1c-3)

[SLIDE #1B] But unity has another cost. Not only does it require a sacrifice for Jesus, but it **also requires a sacrifice for others**. Notice that Paul says ***“I am a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.”*** In essence – “I am in prison for your benefit.” The message of the gospel that Paul carried to the Gentiles, that saved them, was also the reason why Paul was in prison.

This would have hit the church like a guilty dagger. And this is why Paul digresses here. He knows this will tempt the church to feel guilty and discouraged but they shouldn't!

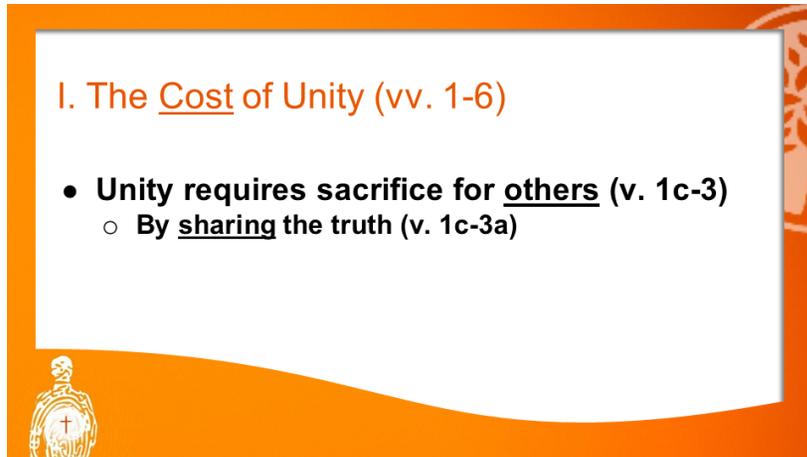
How do I know that? Look at verse 13. Verses 1 and 13 are like the bread on a sandwich that holds the meat and cheese in. Verse 13 says ***“So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you...”***

⁵ John F. MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The – Ephesians, p. 87

Yes, Paul is suffering a cost for their benefit. But it's not their fault, Jesus is in control, and it's totally worth it, because it resulted in their salvation.

In verse 2 Paul's digression begins, with the goal of curbing their guilt, by reminding the church that his sacrifice for them was because God had called him to suffer as an apostle. How can you argue with that.

In verses 2-3 he writes *"assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation"*

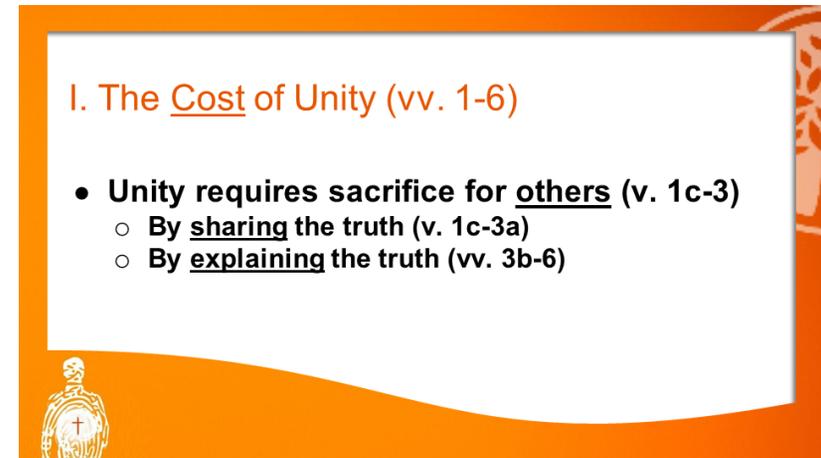


I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- **Unity requires sacrifice for others (v. 1c-3)**
 - By sharing the truth (v. 1c-3a)

[SLIDE #1B "sharing"] Paul sacrificed for them as an apostle by sharing the truth with them.

Paul was graciously made a steward, or a caretaker, by God of the mystery of Christ. This obligated him to share the truth which led to his suffering.



I. The Cost of Unity (vv. 1-6)

- **Unity requires sacrifice for others (v. 1c-3)**
 - By sharing the truth (v. 1c-3a)
 - By explaining the truth (vv. 3b-6)

[SLIDE #1B "explaining"] He also sacrificed by explaining the truth.

In verses 3-6 Paul says:

"how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakes of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

It's one thing to proclaim a message, it's another thing to take the time to disciple people in the understanding and application of that truth. Paul initially spent two years ministering in Ephesus before his imprisonment. Now he could only sacrifice for them by writing.

Paul repeats his teaching on the mystery of Christ because none of us fully understands everything about a truth when we first learn it. The idea that God would unite the Jews and Gentiles together in the church through Christ was a mystery in the Old Testament.

Remember, “mystery” in the New Testament isn’t like a mystery in Scooby Doo, or Sherlock Holmes, or Nancy Drew. It refers to something hidden and unknowable until revealed. It wasn’t a secret that you could find out if you looked for the right clues.

Now even though none of us have been given the special obligation and authority of an apostle, each of us have still been entrusted with gospel ministry inside and outside the church, spiritual gifts to enable that ministry, and opportunities, skills, and knowledge to do so for the LORD.⁶

We all have an obligation, given by God, to sacrifice for Jesus and for others just as Paul did – for the sake of unity in the church. But in order to do that we have to be aware of the costs.

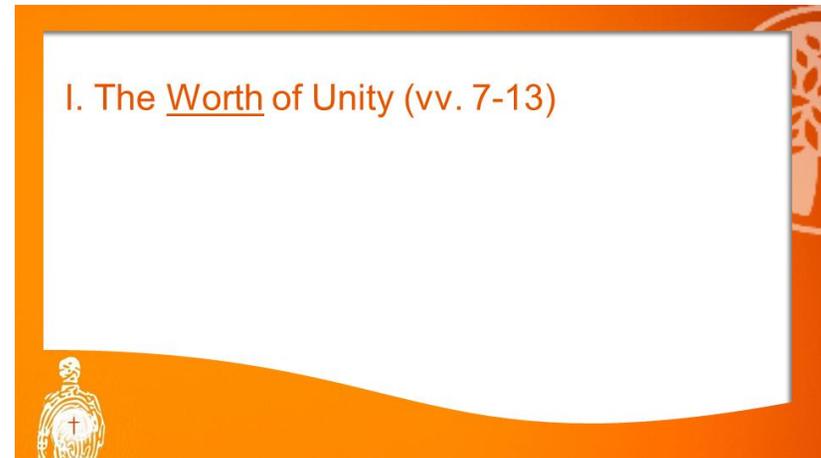
Jesus calls us to do a cost analysis of following him in Luke 9:23 where he says, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

Jesus calls us to a life of self-denial, daily suffering, and obedience to His commands.

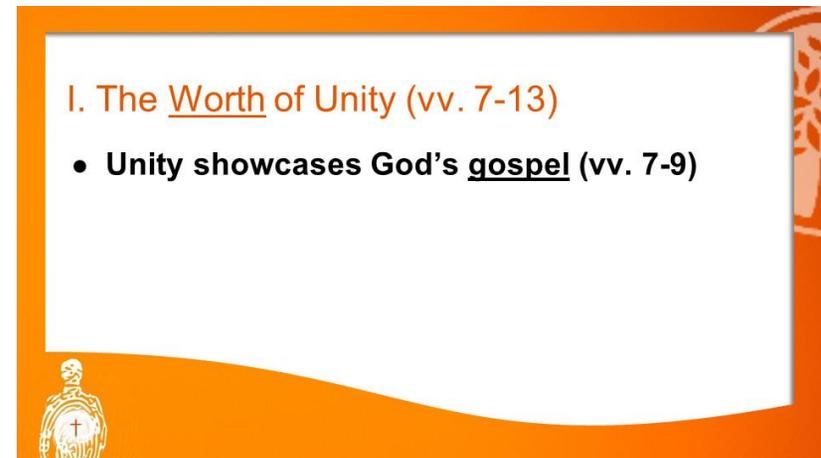
None of us want to do anything hard unless the payoff is worth it. We don’t go to work unless there is a paycheck that puts food on the table and a roof over our heads. We don’t go into surgery unless we know that it’s going to help us get better. So what makes the cost of unity worth it?

⁶ 1 Cor. 12

[SLIDE #2A] Paul explains the worth of unity in verses 7-13.



IV. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)



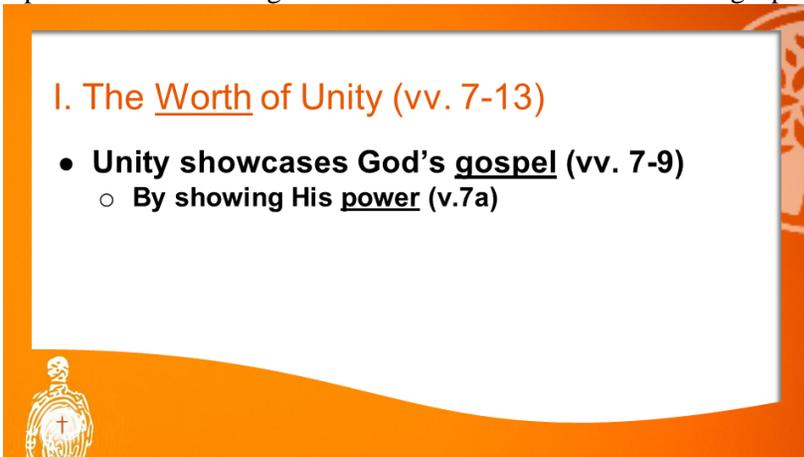
[SLIDE #2A] The first reason it is worth it is **that it showcases God’s gospel.**

Look at verses 7-9.

“7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,”

Here Paul makes a connection between the mystery of Christ and the gospel. He says that the gospel is the means by which Gentiles are included in the church and he is a minister of this gospel message. This relationship means that unity in the church showcases the gospel that made it happen.

Paul gets to showcase this gospel that brings unity as a minister. The Greek word “minister” means “servant.” Paul saw himself as a spiritual waiter serving tables at a Gentile restaurant with the gospel.



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God’s gospel (vv. 7-9)**
 - By showing His power (v.7a)

[SLIDE #2A “power”] How does Paul’s showcase the gospel in his ministry? **By showing God’s power.**

⁷ Acts 9:1-22

In verse 7 Paul is specifically reflects on how the power of God is shown in his life when God saved him and made him a servant of the gospel. ***“which was given my by the working of his power.”***

Paul’s own testimony and radical conversion is one that displays the power of God when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Paul was on his way to persecute Christians and Jesus stopped him dead in his tracks and told him he was going to spread the very gospel he was trying to crush.⁷

People would have looked at Paul and thought “this guy would never become a Christian” in the same way we might look at an angry atheist or certain corrupt politicians and think “that person would never become a Christian.”

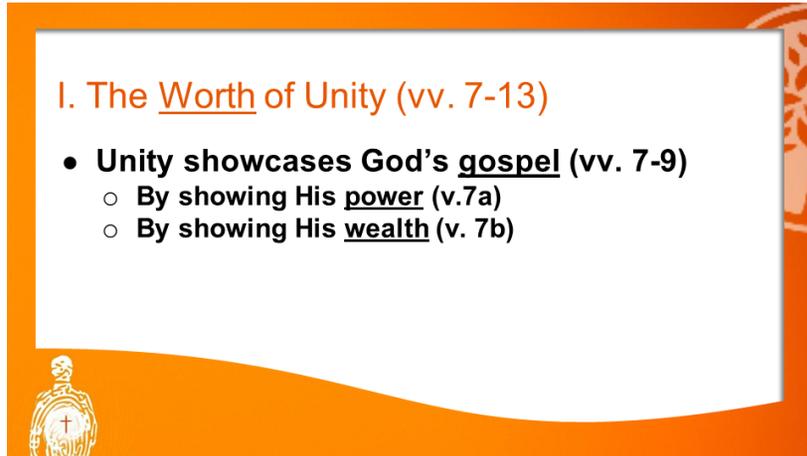
And yet here Paul stands as a showcase of God’s power in uniting him into the church with Gentiles – changing him from a hater of Gentiles to a sacrificial missionary for them.

Romans 1:16 reminds us that ***“...the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation.”***

Every time Paul shared the gospel, he himself was a walking billboard for the saving power of God.⁸

⁸ 2 Cor. 4:7

[SLIDE #2B “wealth”] Paul also showcased God’s gospel by showing God’s wealth. He says in verse 8,



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God’s gospel (vv. 7-9)**
 - By showing His power (v.7a)
 - By showing His wealth (v. 7b)

“To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,”

Every time Paul shared the gospel, He was showing the infinite riches of Christ to people.

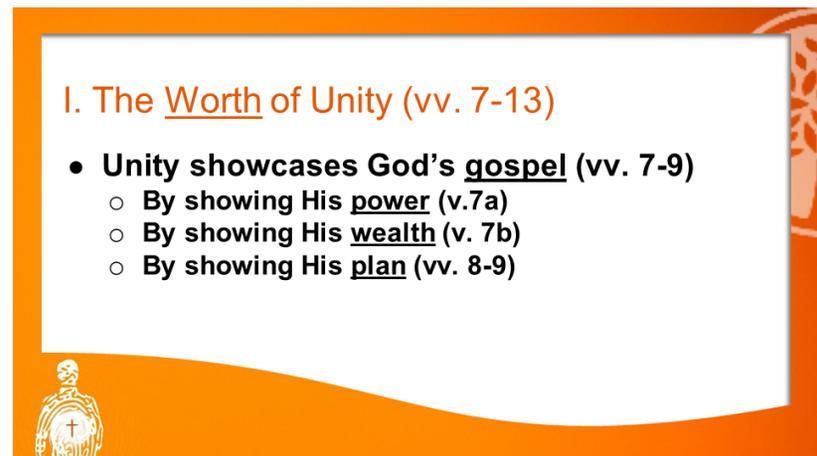
Paul is blown away at this privilege because he describes himself as the *“least of all the saints”* which literally translated means “less than the least.” Paul says, “here is where the most unworthy Christian rank, and I am below that!”

What a genuinely humble disposition we should all seek to possess. Paul viewed himself as the most unworthy and impoverished of all people who became the beneficiary of God’s unfathomable wealth.

⁹ John 13:34-35

The unsearchable riches of Christ encompass all that God is and everything He has given to us.

When we show God’s wealth we are showing His attributes, His grace, His love, His kindness. We are showcasing the blessings He has given to us. We are showcasing the fruit of the Spirit. In John 13 Jesus says that the world will know we are His disciples when we love each other like Christ loved us.⁹ Unity is worth the cost because it shows the world God’s wealth.



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

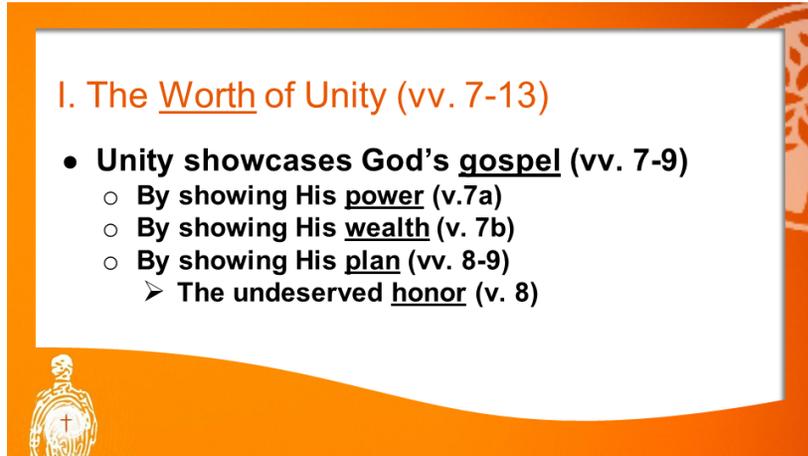
- **Unity showcases God’s gospel (vv. 7-9)**
 - By showing His power (v.7a)
 - By showing His wealth (v. 7b)
 - By showing His plan (vv. 8-9)

[SLIDE #2A “plan”] We also showcase the gospel by showing God’s plan.

Verse 9 says, *“and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,”*

Paul tells us that unity is worth the cost because it brings to light God’s plan. God’s plan, the revealed mystery, is to allow anyone in the world to be part of the church through faith in Christ. It’s an open invitation to all.

Whether people accept or reject the gospel does not stop our ability to bring to light God's mystery. Scripture reminds us that our faithfulness to showcase the gospel, to spread the knowledge of Christ to all people, always glorifies God even if people reject it.¹⁰



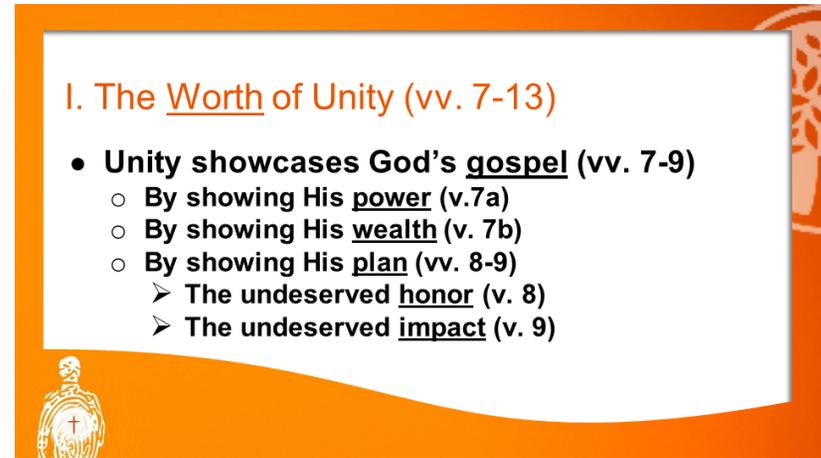
I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God's gospel** (vv. 7-9)
 - By showing His power (v.7a)
 - By showing His wealth (v. 7b)
 - By showing His plan (vv. 8-9)
 - The undeserved honor (v. 8)



[SLIDE #2A "honor"] This is an undeserved honor. We too are the least deserving of all the saints to be part of God's plan for showcasing His gospel. And yet we are made ambassadors of Christ.

¹⁰ 2 Cor. 2:14-16



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God's gospel** (vv. 7-9)
 - By showing His power (v.7a)
 - By showing His wealth (v. 7b)
 - By showing His plan (vv. 8-9)
 - The undeserved honor (v. 8)
 - The undeserved impact (v. 9)



[SLIDE #2A "impact"] This is also an undeserved impact. We don't deserve to make an impact for God's kingdom, but he uses us jars of clay holding the precious treasure of the gospel¹¹ and bringing the light of the gospel to everyone! What a privilege!

This makes the cost of unity is worth it! The unity of our church impacts our ability to showcase the gospel - the power of God, the wealth of God, and His plan are put on display through us. We ourselves a walking billboards of God's saving power. We are the beneficiaries of his wealth, and we too are commissioned to bring the light of the gospel to all people that makes this unity possible.

¹¹

I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- Unity showcases God's gospel (vv. 7-9)
- Unity showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)



[SLIDE #2B] All of this showcases God's glory which is the second reason why unity is worth it.

We showcase God's glory through our unity as a church. Another way you could say it is, "God's gospel and His glory are revealed or obscured by the level of unity in the church." The unity of our church helps us proclaim and adorn the gospel for God's glory.

Paul ends this digression in verses 10-13 explaining how we showcase God's glory.

Look at verses 10-13.

"10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory."

¹² 1 Cor. 1:22-24

I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- Unity showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)
 - By showing His wisdom (v.10)



[SLIDE #2B "wisdom"] The first way it shows God's glory is by showing His wisdom.

Have you ever wondered why God leaves us on earth after we are saved? Why doesn't He just beam us into heaven right away? Why leave us here to suffer and struggle with sin? Wouldn't He be more glorified if we could worship Him in heaven without sinning anymore?

Verse 10 says that the reason He leaves us here on earth is because the church is the best way to display His manifold wisdom.

The word "manifold" means multi-faceted, many-sided, or intricate. God's wisdom is far different than man's wisdom. In fact, His wisdom seems foolish to unbelievers.¹² God's wisdom involved crucifying His Son to save people from their sin.¹³ His wisdom determined to save all the elect through believers proclaiming the

¹³ 1 Cor. 1:18

gospel.¹⁴ His wisdom determined to unite Jews and Gentiles into the church. His wisdom determined for each of our spiritual growth and well-being to be dependent upon our fellowship as a church and the use of our spiritual gifts.

And His wisdom determined that He would be most glorified when the church displays His wisdom not only to the world, but to all spiritual beings – angels and demons.

That’s what Paul means when he refers to *“the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”* This phrase in different places in Ephesians to refer specifically to angels¹⁵ and demons.¹⁶ But since the text doesn’t distinguish between angels and demons here, I think it can be taken to refer to both.

The angels in heaven are not privy to all of God’s wisdom and plans. They are serving the LORD without knowing the outcome. The parables of Jesus tell us that the angels rejoice in heaven when one sinner repents.¹⁷ Peter tells us that angels longed to know when the Messiah would appear and to know all the glories that would follow.¹⁸ Angels do not get to experience the same blessings and grace as we do so they look on longingly. Since they exist and live to glorify God, our unity in the church makes known the wisdom of God and literally gives them cause to praise Him.

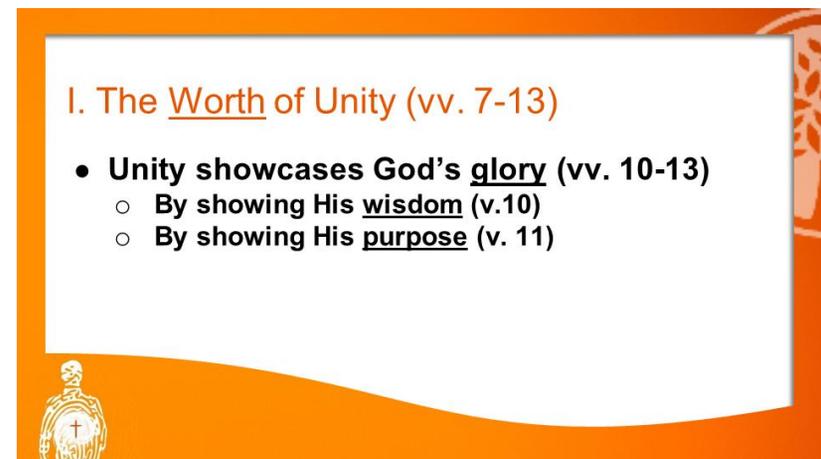
God in His wisdom chose to use us weak vessels to showcase God’s awesomeness.

Commentator William Hendriksen wrote “The church, therefore, does not exist for itself. It exists for God, for his glory. When the angels in heaven beheld the works and wisdom of God displayed in

the church, their knowledge of the God whom they adore is increased and they rejoice and glorify him.”¹⁹

Even though the demons reject God’s wisdom and refuse to glorify Him, they are nonetheless created to bring Him glory in their defeat, judgement, and destruction.²⁰ Satan and his demons are always seeking to sow division in the church.

But when we resist the schemes of Satan, when we preserve unity through the power of God working in us, it displays God’s wisdom to them, their eventual defeat, and our victory.²¹



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God’s glory (vv. 10-13)**
 - By showing His wisdom (v.10)
 - By showing His purpose (v. 11)

[SLIDE #2B “purpose”] The next way our unity showcases God’s glory is **by showing His purpose** behind it all.

Verse 11 says, *“this was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,”*

¹⁴ Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 4:7

¹⁵ Eph. 1:20

¹⁶ Eph. 6:11-12

¹⁷ Lk. 15:7, 10

¹⁸ 1 Peter 1:12

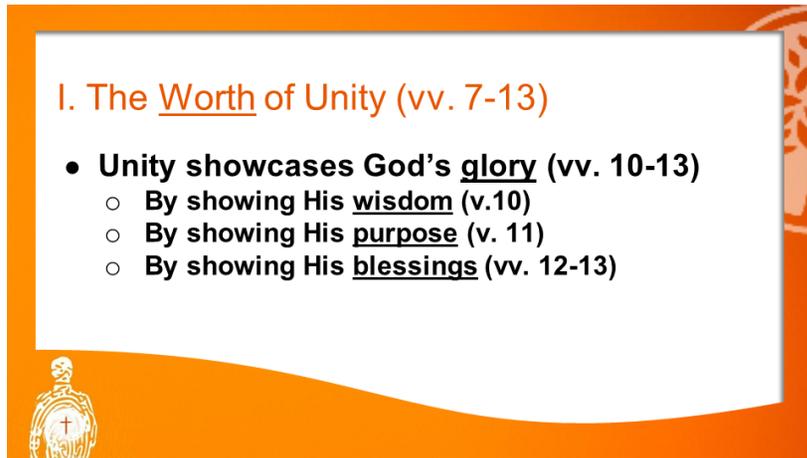
¹⁹ Hendriksen, Ephesians, 158

²⁰ Col. 1:16

²¹ Eph. 6; 2 Cor. 2:14

God didn't unite the Gentiles with the Jews in the church because the Jews blew it to many times. God wasn't figuring out things as he went along. He wasn't building the plane while in flight. This wasn't plan B. There was only ever Plan A. Before creation in eternity past, God had always **purposed** to display his wisdom and glory through the church. It was all a part of his eternal design.

We glorify God when we preserve the unity God purposed for us.



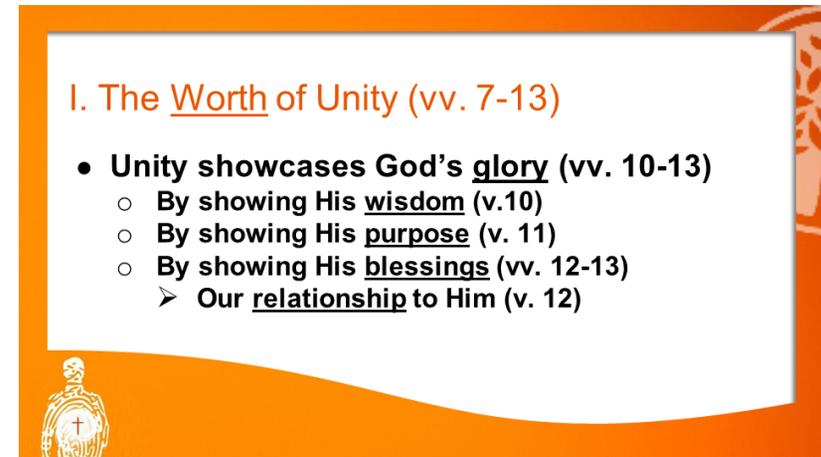
I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)**
 - **By showing His wisdom (v.10)**
 - **By showing His purpose (v. 11)**
 - **By showing His blessings (vv. 12-13)**



[SLIDE #2B "blessings"] And lastly, we showcase God's glory by showing His blessings. Look at verses 12-13.

"in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory."



I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)**
 - **By showing His wisdom (v.10)**
 - **By showing His purpose (v. 11)**
 - **By showing His blessings (vv. 12-13)**
 - **Our relationship to Him (v. 12)**



[SLIDE #2B "relationship"] Paul says that our unity in the church shows the blessing of our relationship to God. Gentiles now have the same access to God as the Jew. There is no Jewish court or Gentile court. There is no distinction. We are all equal at the foot of the cross. All of us together make up the temple of God. We are one body and Christ is our head.

I. The Worth of Unity (vv. 7-13)

- **Unity showcases God's glory (vv. 10-13)**
 - **By showing His wisdom (v.10)**
 - **By showing His purpose (v. 11)**
 - **By showing His blessings (vv. 12-13)**
 - **Our relationship to Him (v. 12)**
 - **Our new status in Him (v. 13)**

[SLIDE #2B “new status”] We also have the blessing of a new status in Jesus. Israel was exclusively God's chosen people, but now Gentiles, even though the church hasn't replaced Israel and the promises of God to her, are also given the glory of being God's people.²²

Paul says in verse 13 that his suffering resulted in their glory – it resulted in the honor and privileges of salvation coming to them.

All of this, the showing of God's blessings, His purposes, His wisdom works together to showcase God's glory.

The unity of the church is worth the cost because it showcases God's gospel and His glory.

²² 1 Peter 2:9

The point of this passage is for Paul to prevent us from being discouraged by the cost of unity. He wants us to be sober to the costs, but also to rejoice because it's worth it!

Application

**Count the cost
and
rejoice in the glory!**

[APPLICATION SLIDE] He wants us to count the cost and rejoice in the glory!

The question you have to ask yourself today, the question that requires all of us to examine our hearts is this: How are you suffering for the sake of Christian unity? What costs have you paid?

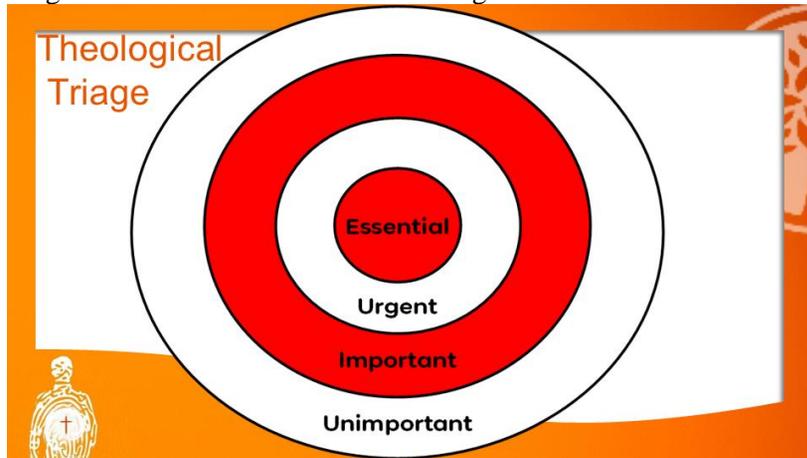
Do you refuse to take revenge when someone sins against you? Do you extend forgiveness as Christ has forgiven you? Or are you holding on to bitterness?

Do you prefer and defer to others on matters? Denying yourself while seeking the benefit of someone else?

Are you actively using your spiritual gifts in the church to build her up? Or do you simply come on Sunday mornings as a consumer?

Are you able to discern which theological hills are important to divide over and which are not?

Sometimes division over theology is the right thing to do but how can you tell when? It's important to know how to do "theological triage" – to assess what is worth dividing over.²³



[TRIAGE SLIDE] Imagine a dart board where the bullseye is where we categorize doctrines according to their importance. The further out you get from the center the less divisive the doctrine should be. Gavin Ortlund wrote a book that helps categorize it this way: essential doctrine, urgent doctrine, important doctrine, and unimportant doctrine.²⁴

“Essential” doctrines include the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Jesus, justification by faith, and the authority of Scripture. These are the doctrines that are worth dividing over. These are the doctrines that Paul reserved his most divisive language over. In Galatians 1 he said that, *“But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to*

you, let him be accursed.” A denial of these doctrines is a denial of Christianity.

The next rank is **“urgent”** because it impacts the health and practice of the church to such a degree that it tends to prevent closeness of fellowship, but we would still consider each other genuine believers.

This second tier of doctrines is the basis for different denominations of churches. These doctrines would range from charismatic gifts to the meaning and mode of baptism, women serving as pastors, or election and predestination.

The next rank is labeled as **“important”** because it impacts Christian theology, but we can remain in close fellowship. This would range from timing of the Christ's millennial kingdom to how old the earth is.

The last category is labeled **“unimportant”** because it shouldn't make an impact at all. This would include musical styles or types of instrumentation for corporate worship or whether Adam and Eve had belly buttons or not.

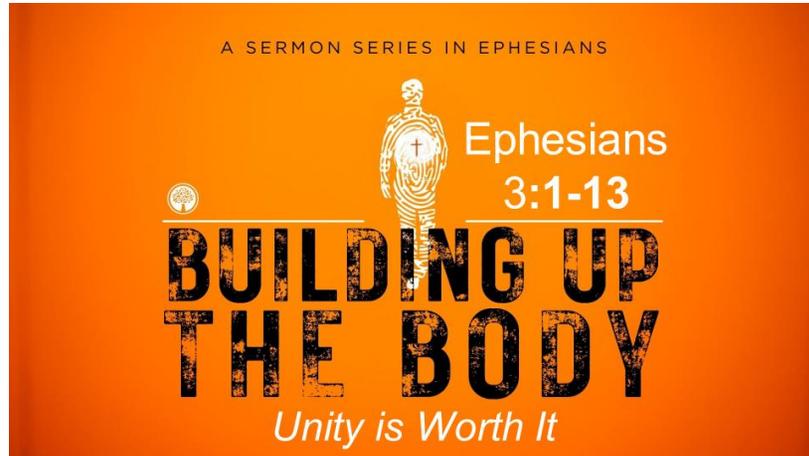
Theological triage doesn't imply that some doctrines are unimportant, just that there is an essential foundation of truth that holds up the entire system of biblical truth.

This kind of triage can be a helpful tool in promoting unity within a church. It can help us be careful not to elevate certain doctrinal issues into divisive ones.

²³ <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity>

²⁴ <https://www.challies.com/book-reviews/finding-the-right-hills-to-die-on/>

[Main Title Slide]



Throughout this passage, Paul has been saying that “Christ is more precious than freedom.” Unity in the church is more precious than comfort, security, and prosperity.

Paul was willing to get bit, to suffer, for the sake of pursuing unity and love? Are you willing to suffer? Are you willing to endure the costs?

Why bother with being a part of a church when it just invites suffering. Why not just watch my favorite pastor online and meet once in a while with my Christian friends at Busy Corner to talk about Jesus?

Why should I stick around when the leaders of a church don't believe the same thing I do. Why should I stick around when someone sins against me. Why should I stick around when the church doesn't sing the songs I like or do things the way I like?

Because it's worth it! It showcases God's gospel and it showcases His glory! Not just to the earth but to the spiritual realm as well.

This is hard work! This beyond our abilities, so where does the power to fight for unity come? Paul shows us in verses 14-22 that it comes from God through prayer. So come back next week Sunday to hear Pastor Somers show us our great need for prayer in this area.

But for this week, let's count the cost and rejoice in the glory of God and our salvation!