

## **THANK ANDROSKY D-GROUP**

### **WELCOME**

Good morning church! I'm Chris Martin, and I'm a staff pastor here, and it truly is my pleasure to open up God's Word with you this morning.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. 1 Corinthians 1. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible, so if you don't have one, grab one of the hard-backed black one under every chair. You can open your phone or tablet. 1 Corinthians 1.

If you open a black one from under your chair, 1 Corinthians is on **page 952.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Now, remember, most of the time here at Fathom we preach straight through books of the Bible, and today we are starting about a year-long study in this letter.

And don't worry, it won't get boring, because 1 Corinthians covers a multitude of topics such as:

- disagreements and divisions in the church,
- sexual sin,
- marriage and singleness,
- idolatry,
- how the church is supposed to function.
- And then some crazy stuff
- like speaking in tongues, and prophecies...

And we're kinda a mixed bag here,

- cause some of you are Baptists or Presbyterians...
- and you're like the frozen chosen,
- and when it comes to charismatic,
- the most expression you'll give
- is maybe an eye close...
- and a single hand palm raise.

While others of you come from charismatic backgrounds,

- so, you've just been waiting for me to teach on this,
- and you're ready to bust out your anointing oils
- and start waving your flags
- and you've got your tambourine ready to go.

Well, easy does it! Put the tambourine away!

I hope we'll dig into this appropriately, so that some of you will loosen up, and others will learn a bit of order.

And then the letter culminates with one of the most extensive teachings on the resurrection and the end times.

So, this is going to be a really fun year!

## **INTRODUCTION: LETTER**

Now, today I want us to cover the introduction to the letter, and when I study for a sermon I use commentaries, like this, and before they ever get to the text, there are sometimes hundreds of pages just setting up the book and doing background work. So, I've done that work, and distilled it down for us.

- 1 Corinthians is a letter written by a man named Paul
- written to the church in the Greek city of Corinth.

And I make the point that it is a letter because we call these things books, but this one is a letter, and in fact,

- 1 Corinthians is actually a series of letters,
- because right after it comes...2 Corinthians...
- Bible scholars!

But in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul mentions a letter before this one that we don't have anymore. It was lost to antiquity.

- So, that would actually make 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians.

And then, 2 Corinthians 2 mentions another letter in-between our two letters,

- which would make 2 Corinthians, 4 Corinthians.
- Confused? Don't worry.

All that to say...this is an ongoing correspondence between Paul and the church in Corinth.

## **TRANSITION**

Because Paul had planted this church in Corinth,

- but after about a year and a half
- he moved on to plant other churches,
- and what we are reading in 1 Corinthians
- is the letter he's writing to them
- after being away for about 4-5 years.

Now he's hearing about all kinds of problems in his old church, and he's writing a letter to address those problems.

So, let's get right into it. 1 Corinthians 1:1

## 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1

[1] Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

### EXPLAIN: CONTEXT

So, the first thing we always do when studying the Bible is ask the context question. You know...author...setting...where in the story are we?

So, I'm going to walk us through a few things. You don't need to turn in your Bibles, but you may want to take notes because these things are of the utmost importance if we are to correctly interpret 1 Corinthians.

- Let's start in the book of Acts.

The book of Acts is the story of the early church, right after Jesus' ascends to heaven.

- And it starts with 11 guys in an upper room,
- and just multiplies exponentially in the most astounding ways...

One of which is through the ministry of a man named Paul.

- But we first meet him in Acts 7 under a different name.
- What's that name?
- Right, Saul. Biblical scholars!

So, in Acts 7 the brand-new bunch of Jesus followers, known at that point as 'The Way', are beginning to find resistance from the Jewish authorities of the time.

- And Acts 7 tells the story of one of their leaders named Stephen.
- He's preaching the gospel,
- and calling the Jews to repentance,
- and the Jewish authorities get pretty ticked.

### **SLIDE ACTS 7:58**

[58] Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

So, this is the first mention of Saul, his Jewish name. Later he would go by his Latin name, Paul. And here's what we know:

- he is likely pretty young, probably in his 20s or 30s,
- and he has ascended quickly to a high role
  - in the Jewish leadership,
  - called the Sanhedrin.
- And people are looking to him for approval in the murder of Stephen.

Saul is young, charismatic, brilliant, devout, successful...and he is very anti-Christian!

Look at Acts 8:

## **SLIDE ACTS 8:1 & 3**

[1] And Saul approved of [Stephen's] execution.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. [3] But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

So, Saul really isn't the most likely candidate to be a part of this new movement of Jesus followers, let alone one of its most important figures. In fact, we open on his life, to find that he is the exact opposite! He's killing Christians.

So, whatever baggage you might bring to a relationship with Jesus, it's probably not as bad as Saul's!

Look at what happens in Acts 9:

## **SLIDE ACTS 9:1-2**

[1] But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest [2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

So, because of persecution, Christians scatter all over the Roman Empire, and now Saul is seeking to get the ones of Jerusalem, specifically a place called Damascus. Verse 3:

## **SLIDE ACTS 9:3-5**

[3] Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. [4] And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" [5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

### **EXPLAIN: CONVERSION**

So, Saul,

- on his way to murder Christians,
- has an encounter with Jesus...
- and this one encounter alters the course of his entire life.

In my Bible it gives this section the title of "The Conversion of Saul". This is what we call this kind of thing. A conversion. Another theological term for this is 'justification'.

- Before, you weren't following the Way of Jesus.
- You were doing your own thing,
- going your own way,
- being your own Lord.

And then you encounter Jesus...

- maybe in an extraordinary way like Saul,
- or maybe in a more ordinary way,
- but that encounter leaves you changed.
- You are now following the Way of Jesus.

That's conversion...that's justification...and that's what happens to Paul.

## TRANSITION

Now, Saul heads into Damascus, and meets some Christ followers, who are rightly a little skeptical about his supposed conversion...right?

Christian killer is now mystically converted! But Jesus speaks to one of them in Acts 9:15-16:

### **SLIDE ACTS 9:15-16**

[15] But the Lord said to him, "Go, for [Saul] is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.

[16] For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

### **EXPLAIN: CALLING**

Now, this is fascinating. There are three groups who Saul is called to reach. And notice the order.

He is called to the Gentiles first,

- and the word Gentiles just means non-Jews...
- so, most of us in this room.

He's then called to kings,

- and Paul ends up in front of kings,
- and even Caesar,
- proclaiming the Gospel.

And then, the children of Israel,

- so, the Jews.
- But they are third on the list.



Now, at this point, the entire church, the Way, is exclusively made up of Jewish followers of Jesus. There are no Gentile Christians.

But that is Saul's calling.

### **EXPLAIN: TIME GAP**

So, Saul,

- now a part of the Way he once was persecuting,
- starts preaching,
- and the Jews get ticked that he has switched teams,
- and they plot to kill him.
- So, the leaders of the church send him off to Tarsus,
- his hometown,
- to avoid being killed.

Now, a very interesting thing happens here in the book of Acts.

- Saul goes dark...
- and disappears from the story,
- and during those chapters we think 13-14 years pass.

What's Saul up to? Well, he is up in Tarsus,

- likely, working.
- Being disciplined.
- Growing in his relationship with Jesus.
- You don't just instantly go from Christian hater
- To THE APOSTLE PAUL,
- church planter par excellence.
- It takes time and discipleship.

So, after more than a decade of waiting, in Acts 11,

- a guy named Barnabas
- goes down to Tarsus to find Saul,
- and brings him up to a place
- called Antioch to plant a church with him.

And, after a year in Antioch, something happens. Acts 13:

### **SLIDE ACTS 13:1-3**

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

### **EXPLAIN: SAUL'S CHURCH PLANTING**

So, it's been 15 years since Saul's conversion, and the call on his life to go to the Gentiles, and now the Holy Spirit sends Saul off to begin planting churches.

- And he does this all over the known world.
- This dude is a hoss! He's just planting churches all over.
- And his methodology is to go to a major city,
- and then to go to the local synagogue to preach the Gospel.

Now, who would he find in the synagogues? Yeah, Jews.

So early in his church planting career he starts with the synagogue, preaching Jesus to Jews.<sup>i</sup>

### **APPLICATION: TIME**

And I just want to pause here and make an application. We don't have time to do all the math, but as we study this story,

- there's this huge time gap between when God calls Saul,
- and when Barnabas picks him up...
- and then another huge time gap between that,
- and when he finally gets to Corinth.

So, we're talking about over two decades of time between calling and Corinth.

And the point I want to make is this: this faith stuff...it takes time. A lot of time!

- Following Christ isn't a sprint, it's a marathon.
- It's not a microwave, it's a slow cooker.

### **ILLUSTRATION: ME**

I got saved in 2001,

- and quickly thereafter felt a call into church ministry.
- And it wasn't until 2005
- that I sensed God had church planting for me,

But then I worked in churches,

- and went to Seminary,
- and got married,

- and lived,
- and worked,
- and grew.

And it wasn't until 2015 that we planted Fathom.

- 10 years!

And then, listen, the first four years went awesome!

- But last year was awful for me,
- and I didn't realize it at the time,
- but Jesus was just taking me deeper and deeper.

This all takes a lot of time!

- I'm not even 20 years into my walk with Jesus,
- and I feel like I'm seeing some things clearly for the first time.
- What about the next 20 years!?!

This goes completely against our instant gratification world,

- but if you are willing to journey the long,
- slow road with Jesus,
- he has incredible callings for us.

## **TRANSITION**

So, that's Paul. Christian killer converted to church planter.

Now, back to our text. 1 Corinthians 1. Verse 2:

### **1 CORINTHIANS 1:2a**

[2] To the church of God that is in **Corinth**,

So, we've talked a lot about Paul, but how does all of this play into Corinth? Well, one more stop in the book of Acts. In Acts 18 here's what we read.

### **SLIDE ACTS 18:1**

[1] After this Paul left Athens and went to **Corinth**.

### **EXPLAIN: CORINTH**

Finally! Hooray Corinth!

Now, let's talk about Corinth real quick!

- Corinth was at a crossroads in the Romans empire,
- specifically in Greece.
- By Paul's day Corinth was known as the bridge of Greece,
- because all North-South land travel
- and all East-West sea travel went through the city of Corinth.

Kind of how Denver is kinda the middle of the country.

- I-70 East/West.
- I-25 North/South.
- We're not really the mid-west,
- but we aren't the west coast.
- We're kinda the bridge.

Now, the result is that Corinth was a very affluent city. Think about it:

- Commerce,
- lodging,
- tourism,
- goods,
- services,
- entertainment,
- technology,
- construction,
- sensual pleasures,
- food,
- drink.
- It's like an adult playground!

Corinth is on the up and up.

- Attracting entrepreneurs...
- attracting those who want to make money...
- attracting those who are looking for the good life...
- lots of transplants...
- from all over the empire.

Corinth is a city that worships money, and experiences, and sex, and play...sound at all familiar?

And now, let's see how Paul begins his church-planting work there.

Verse 4

## SLIDE ACTS 18:4

[4] And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.

So, there he goes again.

- He's starting with the Jews,
- and it has been pretty successful in many other cities,
- so, he's at it again.

But remember:

- who is he first called to?
- Yeah...Gentiles.

Well, look at what happens. Verse 5

## SLIDE ACTS 18:5-6

[5] When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying **to the Jews** that the Christ was Jesus.

[6] And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. **From now on I will go to the Gentiles.**"

Now, don't miss the gravity of this moment!

- From here on, Paul shifts his focus away from the Jews,
- and onto the Gentiles. TO HIS CALL!
- To the very purpose God had for him
- when he saved him on the road to Damascus.

So, Paul is now living into his very calling from God, and God begins to do amazing things through his work of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

- Before Acts 18
- the churches planted all over the Roman Empire
- were predominantly Jewish!

But the church at Corinth

- is the first church
- that is predominantly Gentile!
- And most of us are gentiles!

We wouldn't be here today if it hadn't been for Paul's experience here in the city of Corinth!

## **EXPLAIN: CORINTH'S PROBLEMS**

And this is incredibly important for how we interpret 1 Corinthians.

Because the church in Corinth is a train wreck!

- I mean, people just blast Corinth and its dysfunction...
- and we'll see, they are messed up!

**BUT CUT THEM SOME SLACK!**

- Remember what I just told you about the city?
- The people of this church are primarily ex-pagans, ok?
- These aren't homeschoolers or Christian schoolers!
- These are public school kids...ok?
- hey, you can only mock them if you are one, and I are one!
- 12 years of public school here!
- Can I get a witness?



You're dealing with people,

- Who, prior to converting to Christianity,
- would worship pagan gods
- by going to the temple of Aphrodite
- and having sex with temple prostitutes.
- These aren't things that just change overnight!

So, this church is planted in a city where debauchery is the norm...  
and Paul's like, *"That's my place! I'm going to the Gentiles!"*

## TRANSITION

Now, again, the Jews aren't too pumped on Paul anymore, and they will continue to attempt to kill him throughout the rest of the book of Acts. But look at what the Lord tells Paul in verse 9:

### SLIDE ACTS 18:9–10

[9] And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, [10] for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

### APPLICATION: MY PEOPLE

Oh, how I love that verse. **I have many in this city who are my people.**

Now, I'm a Calvinist.

- I'll just admit it, ok?
- Hello, my name is Chris and I'm a Calvinist.
- OK?

- And if you don't know what that means, no worries.
- And if you do know what that means,
- and you disagree with me, that's cool, too.
- Just know that God predestined you to be at Fathom today...
- listening to a Calvinist, ok?

But when we planted this church this was one of the verses that I was struck by.

- I have many in this city who are my people.
- God has people that he has chosen...
- predestined
- to be his followers!

What kind of God looks down at a city

- where immorality was rampant,
- idolatry,
- greed,
- materialism,
- the pursuit of physical pleasure,
- the pursuit of wealth,
- the pursuit of anything and everything they could want!

What kind of God looks down on that city and says, "I have many in this city who are my people."

Church, I believe this for us...

that God has people who are his...but they just need to hear the Gospel.

- I have many in Denver who are mine.
- I have many in Centennial who are mine.
- I have many in Highlands Ranch who are mine.
- I have many in Littleton who are mine.

For me,

- I have many on Roxbury Drive who are mine.

For you,

- wherever you live, or work, or go to school, or play...
- God has many people there.
- DO NOT BE AFRAID!
- GO ON SPEAKING!
- DO NOT BE SILENT!
- Why? Verse 10: **FOR I AM WITH YOU!**
- Remember what I said Christmas Eve? God is with us!
- **I have many in this city who are my people.**<sup>ii</sup>

## TRANSITION

Now, that's Paul, and that's Corinth.

- He planted this church,
- but now we're four or five years later,
- and he's hearing about all kinds of crazy,
- messed up stuff that's happening back in Corinth.
- So, what's he going to say in the rest of the introduction?
- What's Paul's opening message to the church at Corinth?

Well, he gives an introduction message and then he offers thanksgiving for them.

And, I could have preached another entire sermon on just that, but for the sake of time, I'm going to read the rest of the passage, and make a few comments.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 1:2b-9**

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 ours:

[3] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4] I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, [5] that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— [6] even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— [7] so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, [8] who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## MAIN POINT: SANCTIFICATION

So, what is Paul's message here? Well, let me break it down.

Cause there's a lot there, but I'm going to focus in on two things in particular, which I think encapsulate his entire introduction message and thanksgiving.

He says: **You are sanctified in Christ Jesus, to be saints together.**

### SLIDE SANCTIFIED TOGETHER.

Now, both of those are so hugely important! Let me break them down. Sanctification...

- that's a big theological word that probably doesn't come up in your everyday conversation often,
- but is really important,
- and we talk about it a lot at Fathom.

The Greek word is *hagiazō*.

- It can literally be translated "set apart".
- To those set apart in Christ Jesus.

And theologically, when we talk about sanctification,

- We're talking about maturing in your faith.
- Growing up.
- Or as we put it at Fathom:
  - going deeper.

So, three things to know about sanctification:

## PROGRESSIVE

First, **SLIDE** Sanctification is progressive.

- It is a process.
- It doesn't happen all at once.

You and I are slowly being PROGRESSIVELY sanctified.

- Day by day.
- We are becoming more and more sanctified,
- matured,
- set apart,
- holy,
- going deeper...
- and less and less like the world around us.

You are saved in an instant.

- When you put your faith and trust in Jesus,
- you are saved...
- that's your conversion.
- Just like Paul,
- you are justified.
- Justification is instantaneous.

But then sanctification begins, and it is a process.

## COOPERATIVE

Second, **SLIDE** sanctification is cooperative.

It is the work of God AND of us. It is both.

- Now, justification is a 100% complete work of God.
- We do not justify ourselves.
- We do not save ourselves.

But in sanctification,

- we have a role to play.
- It is not all on us!
- But we play a part.
- God is actively at work transforming us,
- deepening us by the work of the Spirit.

AND

- we are also at work,
- practicing spiritual disciplines,
- praying,
- in the Word,
- straining to become more and more like Jesus.

Sanctification is a work of God and man.<sup>iii</sup>

## COMMUNAL

And then, thirdly, and this is where the second word from our text comes into play. **SLIDE Sanctification is communal.** Sanctified together.

And here is where our Western, individualistic society leads us astray. Because we are told that it's just you and Jesus.

- And you don't need to go to church to be a Christian.
- And you can just listen to your favorite preacher...
- and download your favorite worship album...
- and you go to church whenever you feel like it
- and check out different places.
- But you don't belong to a place.
- And you aren't committed to a people.
- And you aren't in a discipleship group or bible study.

But listen to me:

- **Church isn't an event you attend,**
- **or content you consume,**
- **but a community you belong to.**

This is one of our marks of a disciple at Fathom.

**A disciple of Jesus Christ lives in community.** Sanctified together!

- This is why we've been pushing D-Groups
- and bible studies...
- seriously, sign up for those things.
- They are to help you in your progressive sanctification.



## APPLY: CORINTH

Now, what's the mess that's happening in the Corinthian church? Well, let me list a few things.

- There're major divisions and quarreling over leadership issues.
- There's sexual immorality happening in the church
  - That's causing the pagans in Corinth to blush.
- Members of the church are suing each other.
- They're flaunting their freedoms in Christ
  - and causing weaker Christians to stumble.
- Goodness, there are people getting drunk at communion.
  - You know you have a problem  
when you go back for seconds  
on the communion wine!

And that's NOT what's happening in the CITY of Corinth...

that's what's happening in the CHURCH of Corinth!

Now, look back at verse 2. **To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus...**

- Is that past tense or present tense?
- Remember grammar class?
- That is past tense!
- They have already been sanctified!

But based on that list I just read, does it sound like they're sanctified?

So, what does this mean?

## ILLUSTRATION: MARRIAGE

Well, here's the best illustration I've heard about this: sanctification is kind of like marriage.

Is marriage a past event, or a present process? Yeah, it's both.

- On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2007 I married Maryse,
- and we made our marriage vows.
- And in that instant, I was married.
- And here we are, 12 years later,
- and we're still married.
- But we are still working on it.
- I mean, it's not like in 2007 I was married and that was it.
- It was done.
- Never needed to be worked on.
- Never needed for us to confess to each other,
- and work on our marriage.

Is marriage a past event or a present process? Yes!

I am married, and I am progressing in my marriage.

## APPLICATION: SAINTS

Sanctification is the same.

- You are sanctified,
- and you are progressing in your sanctification.

This is why Paul says: to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together.

Now, when you hear that word 'saints', don't go all Catholic, Mother Teresa on me. Ok?

- The Greek word there is *hagios*. Sound familiar?
- Yeah, it sounds like sanctification, *hagiazo*.
- Same word, different form.

Paul says,

- 'to those *hagiazo* (sanctified) in Jesus,
- called to be *hagios* (saints).'

You could translate it:

**To those made holy in Christ Jesus, called to be holy.**

Do you see what Paul is doing here? It's brilliant!

- He doesn't start with a beatdown
- on all that they are screwing up in.

He'll get to that...next week in fact.

- **But at the outset he's reminding them of who they are**
- **and who they're supposed to be**
- **regardless of where they have strayed.**

He's calling them back to Christ!

## **CONCLUSION**

And that's where I want to begin for us today. As we begin on our journey through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians,

- I want to call you back to,
- or maybe for the first time,
- to be holy...

- to pursue sanctification.
- To be saved,
- and then to walk into maturity.

Fathom Church, we are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together.

- Maybe you need to realize that this Christian thing is a long, slow process, and this year for you is to just slow down and be with Jesus.
- Maybe you need to hear that there are people all around you who belong to Jesus, and it's your call to open your mouth and life to them to declare and demonstrate the Gospel to them.
- Or maybe you've strayed. You have been sanctified... but you've not been living a holy life.

And I don't know where you've strayed. I know where I have.

- But if we will remember who we are.
- If this year,
- as we walk through this letter,
- we commit to being sanctified together,
- then all these things Paul thanks God for in verses 4-9
- will be true of us, too.

This is the challenge for us this year.

Let's pray.

## COMMUNION

We respond in 4 ways:

- Communion
- Tithes & offerings
- Prayer
- Singing

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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<sup>i</sup> David E. Garland, 1 Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament.

<sup>ii</sup> John Mark Comer, *To the Church of God in Corinth...*.

<sup>iii</sup> Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology.