Brief Introduction to 1 Corinthians

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Date: 14 September 2026

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[0:00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Elder Tom Holland teaches on 1 Corinthians 1, verses 1-3.

! Certainly not the ones that were present when Paul was on his missionary journey.
What we're going to be talking about in 1 Corinthians is his second missionary journey. He took at least three, maybe four. But back in those days, Corinth was a centerpiece for various forms of entertainment.
A lot of it had to do with athletic contests. We're very familiar that in Greece the Olympics were held, but not in Corinth.
That community played host to the, if I can pronounce this correctly, if not I'll get Mike Dursham, Issamian Games. That was named after the Isthmus of Corinth, which the Romans built.
[1:28] And the city of Corinth was actually destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. He must have felt guilty because the Roman Caesar, that you will know from your English literature classes, Julius Caesar, he apparently felt guilty because he rebuilt it a hundred years later.

And this area was a Roman colony. Ultimately became the Roman province of Achaia, which you can read about in the New Testament.
Its population was made up of Romans and Greeks. There were Near Eastern people. Usually Near East indicated the nation of Turkey.
And I've been to Turkey. And Turkey and Greeks, they fight all the time. They don't like each other.
And then with a lot of Jews there. The thing that stands out, though, is Corinth, in its heyday, was a center for moral corruption.
It was just a centerpiece. There was all kinds of prostitution, male and female. And the local pagan temple employed thousands of temple prostitutes, male and female.
[3:05] And they plied their trade nightly in the city of Corinth. There was a common phrase that was heard in that day, in that region.

And if a person was misbehaving, someone of note that might have overheard the conversation would turn on them and say, you're behaving like a Corinthian.
And that was meant as an indictment. And I assume was taken as one. Typically, that meant these people were engaging in gross immorality and often open, drunken debauchery.
Now, the apostle Paul came along and he spoke of the sins of Corinth. And I won't list them all.
I don't even know all of them. We'll probably learn them as we go through the book. But Paul listed a number of the sins.
[4:17] Fornication. We get a Greek word from that, pornea, where we get the word pornography.
Idolatry.

Idolatry. Effeminacy, which is the softer side, shall we say, of the homosexuals. And then homosexuality.
Covenants which led to stealing. There was rampant drunkenness. Reviling, meaning the use of very vulgar and abusive language.
And there was all kinds of swindles. They were cheating each other out of their life savings. And prided themselves that they were doing that. And a lot of this went on among churchgoers.
And we'll study this much later. But some churchgoers even committed worse sins than that. They included in the church the sin of incest.
[5:26] We'll discover a guy was sleeping with his mother-in-law. But incest was a big sin in the church in Corinth.

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And Paul described that, and we'll get to that, like I say, later. He said that's the sin that not even pagans commit.
And that's how inflamed he was over that. That the church would permit that to go on. And not even pagans commit that sin.
As we go through this letter, we will be exposed to a lot of problems with the church at Corinth. And many of these problems existed because the leadership of the church in Corinth refused to exercise godly discipline among erring church members.
And these erring church members, for all practical purposes, shunned true repentance. They didn't speak of repentance in the form that we hear about it today.
[6:40] Now, it's interesting that Paul wrote three letters to the church of Corinth. He may have written four.

And lately, there's been a move on to suggest that he may have written five. But we know this, that four letters for sure, but only two ended up in the canon of Scripture.
First and second Corinthians are those that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. And they are included in the canon of Scripture. Now, tonight, we're only going to look at three verses and briefly.
We may cover them in a little more detail next Monday. In 1 Corinthians 1, verses 1-3, we hear these inspired words.
Paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.
[8:08] We read right off the bat, we've got sanctified people here. And typically, that indicates saved people. They've been sanctified in Christ Jesus and are saints by calling.

I still remember what Dr. McGee said when he was alive and ministering. And he said, if you're a saint, you're not an ain't. If you're an ain't, you're not a saint. He was emphatic about that.
But they've been sanctified in Christ. They are saints by calling. They've been called to be saints with all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That shows up in 1 Corinthians 1, verses 1-3.
Now, in typical Pauline fashion, and this is very typical of Paul, he begins this letter by identifying himself as the author.
[9:30] Today, you know, do we even write letters anymore? I mean, we've got email and computers. But if we send a letter, typically we end the letter with our name at the end.

Very truly yours. Tom or love. Whomever. John. Typically, we end letters like that.
Well, here Paul begins by identifying himself. I kind of like that style. You know, who's talking to you? And this guy Sosthenes, he shows up here.
He's an interesting guy. We'll hear a little bit about him. Maybe not tonight. But he shows up again in Acts chapter 18. But there he opposed Paul.
And we don't know if that was one in the same persons. It probably was. But if it was, it shows the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
[10:37] And then Paul identifies the church receiving this letter. It was the church of God, which is at Corinth. It was written specifically to the believers in this church.

And again, he refers to these believers as those sanctified in Christ. As a result of this sanctification, that means being made holy.
Being made like Jesus. But as a result of this sanctification, these people were referred to as the saints, having been called by Jesus into this fellowship.
Now, Paul typically refers to himself as an apostle. He does that many places. And he does that really to establish his credentials.
This was an office. That was created by the will of God. And Paul's not bragging here. Far be it from that.
[11:55] In fact, toward the end of the first letter, Paul refers to himself as the least of the apostles. And why did he do that?

Because he was a persecutor of the church. He was a persecutor of the church. Remember Paul when he was Saul, and he took part in the stoning of Stephen, the first church martyr?
Paul, I don't think he ever got over that. I don't think he ever got over that. But he refers to himself as the least of the apostles.

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And he says there, because I persecuted the church of Christ, and I participated in the stoning of the first church martyr.
And he means by that Stephen. Now it was necessary that the apostle Paul established the fact that he was speaking with authority.
[13:00] What makes that necessary? We will see as we go through this letter, this is a corrective letter. And we're going to learn that there was a lot about Corinth that needed correcting.

A whole lot. I'm amazed that one whole wing of the church really built a lot of theology on a church that was subject to a lot of correction. But we'll talk about that down the road.
But let me return for just a moment to this term that Paul uses here, the term saint. In this regard, the church in this letter is not the church belonging to Corinth.
This is the church that belonged to God and it happened to be located in Corinth. There's a big difference. The term used here is hagios, meaning they have been set apart by God.
God set them apart. Being set apart is our position in Christ through this process known as sanctification, being made holy.
[14:21] Note the passage says that we have become saints by calling. We've been called to be saints.

The church belonged to God. It just happened to be located in Corinth. And they've been set apart. And that's the process we know as sanctification.
And the passage tells us that we've become saints by calling. The Lord called us to that position. It is our position in Christ Jesus.
In this regard, the newest and most obscure believer is a saint in Christ.
That's what he means by being called. Believers have been made holy having received a holy calling.
[15:28] It is not by amassing a record of good works, although we're supposed to do that. We read about that in Ephesians chapter 2.

We have been sanctified by Christ and in so doing, Christ calls us to be His saints. Now in truth, we have been sanctified according to a passage in the book of Hebrews.
which says that all true believers have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all.
Every believer has been sanctified by this holy calling which the book of Hebrews describes for true believers.
Now it is important to keep this in mind. Almost the entire letter of 1 Corinthians deals with this church shows us a letter that is caught up in wrong doctrine and wrong behavior.
[16:42] Nearly every mistake that a church can make will be made by the church at Corinth. We're going to say that. It's just the truth. But in spite of that, that great apostle Paul deals with this church reminding them, hey, remember you're called saints of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You stand in Him. Now this does not mean that this church didn't have within its ranks unbelievers. They did. That was sure. But positionally, in Christ, most in this church were flowers of Christ. They were just blooming. And as we go through this letter, we should and will be reminded of this fact. All true believers must be constantly reminded of their position in Christ and their practice in Christ.
Ask yourself daily, not am I behaving as a Corinthian, but am I behaving as a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? That's a good question to ask.
[18:05] At the end of the day, these men in this church were saints of the Lord Jesus. And Paul, he's going to end our session tonight with a very familiar exhortation.

He uses this throughout his writings. Grace to you. I'm in 1 Corinthians 1.3. Grace to you and peace.
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wishes on them grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
That was the common form of greeting in Paul's day and he employed it all the time. Often. grace is favor.
Peace is a fruit of grace. You're not going to have peace if you don't have grace.
[19:20] peace. Paul was applying here a phrase that he employs in Philemon. Another great book of his. The peace, this is Philemon 4.7.

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The peace that Paul speaks of is the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension. we can't figure it out the peace of God that's beyond our comprehension the world does not have this peace you show me a world at peace and I'll show you a world that's been deceived and is being deceived as we speak the world cannot give that kind of peace it's a phrase appropriate for a believer to another believer it speaks of blessings that only true believers possess and only true believers can give to other true believers so it's a tremendous phrase and you'll hear Paul use that often and we're going to hear him use it many times in our studies and already have fellows let's pray and gracious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
Lord we ask you to be with us through this study it's a great study a marvelous study but it's also a study of sad times in our fellow church in Corinth and happy times but Lord be with us in this study and the study to come may Christ be honored and glorified just as he has sanctified us in him I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ Amen to learn more visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net may may may may

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