

I CORINTHIANS 1:1-3
INTRODUCTION!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to I Corinthians chapter 1 as we begin our study of this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

I hear today, and I have even said it, *“We need to be like the first century church!”*

For me, what I mean by that is simple. In fact, when the Lord brought me up here some thirty years ago, this is the passage He gave to me for this church. It is out of the book of Acts and Luke tells us in Acts 4:42-43, **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.”**

It is really very simple. We tend to make it so complicated today. We need to have huge worship teams. We need the right lighting. We need smoke for worship. We need to be entertained. We need to have a rock star pastor. We need this and we need that.

The reality is, you can have a church with a few people and if you follow what the early church did, a small church and a large church can do great things.

Again, this is what you do!

TEACH DOCTRINE!

FELLOWSHIP!

SHARE IN COMMUNION!

PRAY!

And as you surrender to God, He will not only work in you but through you and as true as that is for individuals, it is also true for the church.

But we also need to remember that the first century truth had all kinds of problems that they needed to deal with as well. It was not a perfect church because imperfect people go there.

Thus, almost every letter that was written dealt with false teachers bringing in false doctrine to these churches.

We see fighting in these churches.

And Corinth was not excluded from these problems as we will see in a few minutes.

But what was the city of Corinth like back in Paul's day?

First of all, what is Corinth like today?

As of 2025, the city of Corinth, Greece, has a population of around 50,000 people, making it a relatively small city compared to other major urban centers in Greece; the modern city of Corinth is located near the ruins of the ancient city, and its size is significantly smaller than its historical counterpart.

But it wasn't like that in Paul's day! It was a thriving city, people were coming and going, lots of things going on, and most of them were not good!

Because of its location, Corinth was a very prosperous city during Paul's day. It had a population of some 700,000 people during this period of time.

Also, about two-thirds of the people were slaves.

Besides its local population there were many travelers who came and went through this city.

Corinth was located only some four miles from the Aegean Sea in south central Greece. And Greece is divided basically into two parts.

The southern part was called the *Peloponnesus*, where Corinth was located.

This southern part is almost an island attached to the northern part of Greece by a very narrow four-mile-wide isthmus.

Also, the northern part of Greece has been called the mainland.

On the western side was the Gulf of Corinth leading into the Ionian Sea.

On the eastern side was the Saronic Gulf and the port city of Cenchreae which opened to the Aegean Sea.

Now here is the problem. Sea travel around the Peloponnesus was very time consuming and it was very dangerous!

In fact, sailors, because of it being so treacherous, had the following saying. ***“A sailor never takes a journey around Malea [the cape at the south end of the peninsula] until he first writes his will.”***

In other words, if that was the route you were going to take, you might not make it back!

There in Corinth ships would sail into the channel, and the smaller ships would then be carried over the four-mile isthmus on rollers which went directly past Corinth.

But, if the ship was too big to carry across this isthmus, they would unload the cargo and then they would carry it across this isthmus and load it on a different ship, which usually went to the Roman port city of Puteoli.

Now as crazy as that sounds, that is what they did because again, it was quicker, more economical and much, much safer than sailing 250 miles around the Peloponnesus peninsula.

That meant that much traffic ran through Corinth, going east to west but also, during this period of time, there was much land traffic that ran north to south, including to and from Athens, which was only some forty miles to the northeast of Corinth. It was a very prosperous city!

In A. D. 67 Nero began work on a canal, but one was not completed until 1893.

Not only was their much traffic through Corinth for commercial reasons, but it was a successful entertainment center. They held the Isthmian Games in Corinth and the Olympian Games were held in Athens.

Besides this wealth it had, besides the entertainment that it had, Corinth was also a very religious city.

Some 2,000 feet high was this great mound called *Acrocorinth*, which was able to hold the entire population of Corinth in case of war and also it had a temple to the goddess of love, Aphrodite.

From the top of this temple, on a clear day Athens could be seen. It was some forty miles away.

Again, this was a religious temple, and, at night the 1,000 temple priestesses, which were nothing more than temple prostitutes, would come down into the city to offer themselves to the men in the name of the god they worshiped, in a religious act and this would help support the temple.

Not only was it wealthy, not only did it have all this entertainment, not only was it religious, but also, they prided themselves in gaining knowledge.

You see, they had a philosophical center, and like Athens, philosophers loved to gather and learn new things!

When you have a mixture like this; wealth, entertainment, vulgar religious practices and philosophy, you also have a debased, a wicked, immoral society, and that is exactly what we see here in Corinth!

In fact, their lifestyle was so bad and so well known that the term *KORINTHAZOMAI*, meaning, “*to act like a Corinthian*” became synonymous for debauchery and prostitution.

To “*Corinthianize*” meant to partake in prostitution which had become so much a part of the Corinthian culture that the name of the city became synonymous with the act itself.

There was even a saying at that time, “*Not every man can afford to visit Corinth.*”

How would you like the city you live in to be known that way?

But that was the reality of Corinth!

Leon Morris describes Corinth as “*Intellectually alert, materially prosperous, but morally corrupt.*”

Listen to this excerpt from John Bunyan’s book, *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

In this portion of the book, Christian and Faithful are heading towards the Celestial City but to get there they have to go through Vanity Fair, which reminds me of Corinth, and I am sorry to say, of our nation today.

This is what John Bunyan wrote,

Almost five thousand years ago, pilgrims, on their way to the Celestial City, went through this town.

Finally Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their laborers, set up this fair to provide every kind of entertainment for travelers and to sell all types of merchandise all year long.

And still, at this fair is sold such merchandise as fine houses, lands, stocks and bonds, false security, gay clothing, jewelry, expensive cosmetics, gold and silver, antiques, pearls, precious stones, fame, fortunes, reputations, virtue, honor, popularity, positions, phony titles, counterfeit degrees, contests, chances, games, votes, elections, government offices, personal influences, padded reports, propaganda, falsehoods, fictitious news, deceptions, artificial personalities, schemes, tricks, comics, beauty queens, sex appeal, prostitutes, human lives, and souls of men.

Moreover, at this fair at all times are gambling, juggling, cheating, defrauding, embezzling, lying, stealing, swindling, rogues, knaves, libertines, carnivals, festivities, drinking, revelries, conniving's [scheming's], fools, thugs, lewd women, murders, adulteries, and all kinds of immoralities.

The broad road that leads to destruction which brings the fair much trade lies through the town.

And in this town of Vanity are taverns, night clubs, roadhouses, seductive shows, popular casinos, culture societies, fashionable churches, synthetic Christians, sectarian denominational segregation, professional pastors (using mass psychology, setting themselves up as lords over God's heritage, ruling their congregations for "*filthy lucre*," beating and fleecing their flocks instead of feeding them or setting them a good example).

There are also famous pseudo scientists, charlatan physicians, dishonorable crafty lawyers, unscrupulous politicians, clandestine bookmakers, racketeers – impostors of all kinds.

But, if anyone going to the Celestial City would miss this town of Vanity, he must of necessity go out of the world.

The Prince of Peace, when here on earth, went through this town to His own country; and this same Beelzebub was then – as now – lord of the fair.

He tried to sell the Prince many of his vanities. He even offered to make him manager of the fair.

Because the Prince was such an influential person, Beelzebub led Him from section to section and showed Him all the various nations of the world and promised to make Him ruler over all, if He would but cheapen himself and buy some of the merchandise, and He left the town without spending a penny for any of Beelzebub's goods.

Now, as soon as Christian and Faithful entered the fair they created a sensation, not only in the fair but throughout the town.

First, their dress was so different from the people of the place that everyone gazed at them. Some said they were cranks; some called them outlandish; others said they were there to create trouble.

Second, their speech was different. Few could understand what they said, for naturally they spoke the language of Canaan, while those who kept the fair were men of this world. From one end of the fair to the other, they seemed like barbarians.

Third, these pilgrims showed no interest in their goods, and this worried the people of the fair most.

Christian and Faithful did not even care to see them, and when they were asked to buy they would stop up their ears and say, "***Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,***" looking upwards as if they belonged to another country.

- John Bunyan (Retold by James H. Thomas), *Pilgrim's Progress*, pp. 89-91

Keep in mind that when John Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress, he was locked in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They tried to silence this man and yet, his words continue on today!

Also, this took place back in the 1600's and not in 2025. But what was happening back then, we see beginning to happen today!

The world is trying to draw us back, to have us walk away from God, using all kinds of enticements, discouragements and-so-on.

And that was the time frame that Paul was writing this letter, a time of moral depravity and the church was struggling in this area.

We will see that some of the Corinthian believers had been guilty of practicing those sins before their conversion, before they were saved. We see that in I Corinthians 6:9-11, **“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”**

This immoral lifestyle is what they came out of when they came to Christ.

The problem for some is that they were still practicing some of these immoral lifestyles and not just some of the old sins but some sins that the Gentiles did not even practice it was so bad, like incest.

We see this in I Corinthians 5:1-2 where Paul tells us, **“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles - that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.”**

Not only do we see this sin in a young man that is a Christian, but we see the church welcome this young man into the church, not dealing with his sin. They felt they were showing the love of Christ by their actions, when in reality, this was not love. Again, he was a Christian, not an unbeliever, and the church was proud that they accepted all people. Sounds like today.

And hear me out on this. It is not that we don't accept people, we do. But if you are saved and living in sin, that needs to be dealt with and as we will see when we get to I Corinthians chapter 5, Paul has this man kicked out of the church until he repents and gets right with God.

For unbelievers, yes, they are welcomed, but there does come a time that they either come to Christ and have their lives changed or they will leave because they will not be able to handle what God's Word has to say!

Imagine reading this verse here in I Corinthians in some churches today, **“Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.”**

They couldn't read these verses because it would go against what they believe and what they allow in the church!

As you may remember when we went through the book of Acts, Paul established the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey in Acts chapter 18.

Prior to going to Corinth, Paul was in Athens, which was northeast of Corinth.

And as Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to arrive there in Athens, Paul thought he would share his faith.

In Acts 17:16-21 we see what transpired, **“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, ‘What does this babbler want to say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,’ because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.’ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.”**

And Paul shared Jesus with them, and things did not go too well. They heard what Paul said and for most of them, that is as far as it went. There were some who believed, but not many. And after this Paul heads to Corinth!

In Corinth Paul met fellow tentmakers and believers Aquila and Priscilla who fled Rome in 49 A. D. when Claudius issued an edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from that city.

Paul spent 1½ years, 18 months in Corinth sharing the Gospel, establishing the church. (Acts 18:11)

We call this epistle or letter I Corinthians, but in reality, it seems that this is the second letter that Paul wrote to the church in Corinth for in I Corinthians 5:9 we are told, **“I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.”**

That first letter was lost and thus, we call this letter, I Corinthians, but both of these letters were corrective in nature.

Now the big question for many is this, ***“Who wrote this letter?”***

Even the most liberal scholars agree that Paul wrote this letter.

In fact, Clement of Rome called this letter back in 95 A. D. ***“The Epistle of the Blessed Apostle Paul.”***

Also, many other church leaders attributed this letter to Paul like Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian as well as others.

The date of Paul’s writing of this letter is somewhere between A. D. 54 to A. D. 56 and Paul wrote this letter when he was in Ephesus, on his third missionary journey, after receiving a letter and by word of mouth from Corinth telling Paul of the difficulties they were having, and Paul writes back to help correct their errors.

Like I have said, I believe this letter is just as important to the church in America today as it was to the church in Corinth back then.

You see, we suffer, if I can use that word, and I believe I can in this case, from prosperity! We suffer from perverted religious activity! And we suffer from worldly philosophies that have negated what God has said in His Word to us!

The solution is to listen and to learn these lessons so that we may grow.

In speaking of the church in Corinth, Moffatt hits the nail on the head when he tells us, ***“The church was in the world, as it had to be, but the world was in the church, as it ought not to be.”***

Does that ring a bell for us today? You bet it does.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones also gives to us this perspective of the church today as he says, ***“The whole drift toward modernism that has blighted the church of God and nearly destroyed its living Gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy.”***

Like today, the Corinthians loved to indulge their desires in whatever they wanted.

Listen to these words and you will see how it fits our nation and really, our world today.

We are told,

The ideal of the Corinthian was the reckless development of the individual. The merchant who made his gain by all and every means, the man of pleasure surrendering himself to every lust, the athlete steeled to every bodily exercise and proud in his physical strength, are the true Corinthian types: in a word the man who recognized no superior and no law but his own desires.

- von Dobschutz, Cited in Parry, p. x

And you will see as we go through I Corinthians and then II Corinthians, that things were bad in the church!

We will see the carnality, the divisions, the strife that was going on and yet, they were boasting about the spiritual gifts that they had.

And what is interesting to me is that the church in Corinth, as well as any church today, will take on the characteristics of the environment around it if it doesn't plug the holes that are allowing false teaching, filth to come in!

And as you see how bad the church was, the city of Corinth was even worse, if you could imagine.

But the church should be different than the world, but, like I have said, they were taking on the characteristics of the world, just as we see happening in churches today!

Keep in mind that this letter was written to a specific church dealing with the issues that were going on there.

Now some may feel that this is not for us. It was for them. So why even study it?

Because the Holy Spirit gave these words to Paul and what was going on in the church back then, still goes on in churches today and thus, these are lessons for us so that we may grow in the Lord!

I have called our study this morning – ***INTRODUCTION!***

I know, brilliant. But it truly is an introduction to this letter.

I have also broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

THE WILL OF GOD – I CORINTHIANS 1:1

SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST – I CORINTHIANS 1:2

GRACE AND PEACE – I CORINTHIANS 1:3

With that as our introduction to this letter, let's begin reading in I Corinthians chapter 1, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word!

I CORINTHIANS 1

VERSE 1

We see the writer of this letter identify himself as – *PAUL!*

Again, this makes it easy for us, we don't have to guess like we do with the letter to the Hebrews. I believe that it was written by Paul, but if not, it was written by the Holy Spirit as all the letters were!

And after his name he says that he was “called to be an apostle.”

In this verse the words “to be” should be in italics, which tells us they were added to the text. They were put there for clarity, but I think it takes away from what Paul is saying here.

The text should read “Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ through the Word of God . . .”

Why is that even important.

Because Paul wants them to know where he stands because he has some difficult things to say to this church, some corrective action, some rebuke, and it is not going to be easy and some of the Christians in Corinth did not even respect Paul.

Paul's standing and authority as an apostle were not appreciated among the Christians of Corinth.

Then why even state those things if they did not respect his authority and the fact that he was an apostle?

Here is the reason and Paul is basically telling them, ***“You all may not recognize my apostolic credentials. That is of little importance to me, because I am not an apostle because of a popular election. I am not an apostle through the appointment of the other apostles. I am an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, not the will of any man.”***

I can tell you with full assurance that my position here at Calvary Chapel of Manitowoc is not because the elders and the congregation asked me to come and be the pastor of this church.

I am where I am, and I am doing what I am doing because it was the will of God for my life! I am 100% certain of that fact!

What about you?

Are you doing what you are doing because it is the will of God?

Or are you doing what you are doing and your basic response for the reason you are doing or not doing something is ***“I don’t know. I am just doing it!”***

Wrong answer!

It needs to be the will of God for your life. You need to seek that direction from God no matter what you are doing.

One writer put it this way, ***“God doesn’t want confused, bewildered, frustrated Christians wandering around anxiously searching for His will. He wants people who are walking confidently and peacefully in His will.”*** (J. Grant Howard, Jr.)

How true that is!

God’s will applies to every part of the church’s and believer’s lives. At least it should! If not, then we are doing our own thing and that is not a good way to live out your faith. If you are doing your own thing, then you are not doing what God has called you to do!

Now some may feel, ***“Is this even important?”***

You bet it is. Let me share a few Scriptures with you and you will see what I mean.

And please understand that God's Word opened up to our hearts by the Holy Spirit shows us what God's will is for our lives.

Other times, God will speak directly to our hearts about things, what we should do or what we should say.

The Holy Spirit is guiding us, but are we listening and obeying?

Again, this is a big deal! Let me show you what I mean.

Listen to what Jesus said, and you will see the importance of doing the will of God. In Mark 4:1 we are told, "**For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.**"

Obedience is the key!

Also, in Romans 12:2 Paul wrote, "**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**"

How do we renew our minds?

By being in the Word of God and allowing the Spirit of God to speak to us as we are reading God's Word!

Here is one that is not too popular today and that is what Paul wrote in I Thessalonians 4:3-5, "**For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God.**"

God wants our lives to be set apart for Him and one of the things that He wants in our lives is to not be sexually immoral in our lifestyle! Don't go back and be like the world, be like Christ!

In I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul gives us three things that are God's will for our lives.

Listen to what he wrote, **“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”**

Here is the will of God for your life.

REJOICE ALWAYS!

PRAY WITHOUT CEASING!

GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING!

If you want to be obedient to God, to be in the will of God, then practice these things!

We saw what Peter said in our study of I Peter, **“For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.”** I Peter 2:15-17

God's will for our lives is doing good, not using the freedom we have in Christ for sinning!

And in I John 2:17 we are told, **“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

Abiding in Christ, doing the will of God shows that we are a child of God!

Let me give you this example of God's will for our lives.

Today people move from one location to another, sometimes for a job situation, sometimes they just want to get out of an area, sometimes for family reasons, and so on.

The key for me, and what I ask people when they are planning on moving, is this. *“Did you find a church in the area you are moving to where you will be fed, and you can grow in your relationship with God?”*

And for the most part I hear, *“It is a big city, they have more churches than they do here, I am sure we will find something!”*

And what ends up happening is that they don’t. I have known people who have not found a church in ten or fifteen years.

Now you may be thinking, *“What does that have to do with the will of God?”*

Again, go to the Scriptures.

Paul, in Hebrews 10:24-25, **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**

You see, being involved in a church is part of God’s will for your life and yet, even in Paul’s day, some were avoiding the assembling together with other believers!

For Paul, he knew that his life was immersed in doing the will of God and so should ours!

Then Paul mentions **“Sosthenes our brother.”** Most likely Sosthenes was the person spoken of in Acts chapter 18.

While Paul was in Corinth, the Jews brought Paul before Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia because they didn’t like what Paul was saying regarding Jesus.

Gallio heard their complaints, and we are told, “And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.’ And he drove them from the judgment seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.” Acts 18:14-17.

Because they lost this case, the Jews were so mad that they took Sosthenes, who was the new ruler over the Synagogue and the one who probably presented this case against Paul, and they beat him up! They didn’t like to lose, I guess!

The interesting thing here is that if this is the same man, the enemy of Paul and the church, he is now saved, a friend of Paul and the church!

I guess if you can’t beat them, you join them and that is what Sosthenes did, he became a Christian!

How beautiful it is to see the healing power of Jesus to make an enemy a brother in the Lord.

God did it with Paul, an archenemy of the church and He did it with Sosthenes, and He continues to do the same today if we would only let Him!

So we have seen – ***THE WILL OF GOD!***

As we read on Paul is going to be speaking about what happened in their lives. That they were – ***SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST!***

VERSE 2

Paul starts out with “**To the church of God**” and that word church in the Greek language means “*a called-out people.*”

Each church has two addresses.

What do I mean by that?

First there is the geographic address or “*at Corinth.*”

Our geographic address is *Manitowoc Wisconsin!*

But there is another address that we have and that is “*in Christ Jesus.*”

And that is the most important address that we can have, for we truly are citizens of heaven and not of earth or we are not earth dwellers!

Keep in mind that the ancient Greek word for “**church**” (*ekklesiai*) was a non-religious word for an “*assembly*” of people, typically gathered together for a specific purpose.

That is why Paul specifically says when he writes to them, “**To the church of God which is at Corinth.**”

This letter was for them, those believers in Corinth!

Now I need to say this, and I will apologize now for it.

When I hear or read of Corinth, I think about Actor Ricardo Montalbán who spoke of *fine Corinthian* leather in his advertisements for the Chrysler Cordoba in the 1970s. Montalbán’s delivery of the term became a popular culture catchphrase.

The funny thing is, Corinthian leather is not an actual type of leather at all, it is a marketing term. But it caught on. I still remember it today and I probably have messed up your mind and now you are thinking about it. Sorry!

For Paul, he wants them and us to understand that this is not a gathering of the world to decide things, this is a gathering of God's people to hear what God has to say.

That is a big difference, and the church is making itself worldly, being influenced by the world instead of obeying the Lord and His Word!

Make no mistake about it, it is God's church and yet it had become the church of Corinth as they let the culture influence them instead of influencing the culture for Jesus.

That is so important for us to understand. First and foremost, we are the – **CHURCH OF GOD!** But when we allow the world to come in, when we allow their philosophies to come in, we become the church wherever we are located! Be careful!

It is as Morgan said, *“The measure of failure of the part of the church is the measure in which she has allowed herself to be influenced by the spirit of the age . . . We are sometimes told today that what the church supremely needs is that she should catch the spirit of the age. A thousand times no. What the church supremely needs is to correct the spirit of the age.”*

Amen to that!

And the bottom line is this. Is the church influencing the city, or is the city influencing the church?

Here in Corinth, it was the city that influenced the church and that should not be, and Paul will correct them on that, as we will see.

Think about this for a minute. Paul spent some 18 months there in Corinth teaching them the things of God and yet, in this letter there were many problems, and they were not growing up in Christ. They remained spiritual babies.

And when Paul was in Ephesus, he got a letter explaining these problems, all the questions that they had, and this letter is in response to those things.

And then Paul speaks of – *SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST!*

Of this Ray Stedman wrote,

Justification is the description of the change that God makes within an individual when he comes to Christ.

It is what we also call the “*born again*” experience that we are hearing much of today. It means an inward change of nature, a deep and fundamental difference in outlook and attitude because of a deep change within.

Now, sanctification is the visible result of that in the behavior of individuals. It is all that change working out in terms of practice so that you see that someone is different.

- Ray Stedman, I Corinthians 1:2

Let me explain it like this.

Justification happens the moment we come to Christ. We are justified or when God the Father looks at us, in a positional sense, He sees no sin and there is no record of our sins because they have been paid in full by Jesus, His shed blood made atonement for our sins!

It is also at that moment that the sanctification process begins where God is molding and shaping our lives into the men and women that He wants us to be! And that is a lifetime process!

Paul speaks of this work of God in our lives in I Thessalonians 5:23-24, **“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”**

This is where the Corinthian believers were struggling, this sanctification process as they were hindering the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives by the things that they were doing, the things that they were saying!

And again, this is what Paul will address in this letter!

Now we see again these words “**to be**” and then the word “**saints.**” Please understand that once again these words were added for clarity, but they are not there in the original writings and once again it confuses this issue that Paul is making here.

The believers in Corinth are “**called saints**” not because of what they have done, which was not too impressive as we are going to see, but because of what God has done, He has made them saints!

The Greek word for “**saint**” is *HAGIOS* which means “*set apart one*” or “*holy one.*”

In the Old Testament the implements for Temple worship were holy, they were set apart to be used in the worship of God and thus, we too are set apart to be used in the worship of God, we are saints!

It is as Paul said in Hebrews 2:10-11, “**For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.**”

You see, God has set us apart for His glory! We might not always look or act like Christians, but we still are Christians as was the case here with the Corinthian believers!

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Once, two brothers stole a neighbor's sheep. They were caught and punished. They were both branded on the forehead with the letters "**ST**" for "**sheep thief.**"

One brother was so embarrassed he fled town to hide his mark of shame.

The other brother took responsibility for his crimes, and despite the stigma, stayed in the community to rebuild a good reputation.

Years later a town newcomer noticed "**ST**" on the man's forehead. He asked a local what it meant.

The fellow replied, "***I'm not sure, but I think it means 'saint'.***"

All of us should live so that we're known as saints.

So we have seen that we are – **SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST!**

As we finish up this morning we will be looking at – **GRACE AND PEACE!**

VERSE 3

Here we see the Siamese twins of the New Testament, **GRACE** and **PEACE!**

And they are always in this order.

First, we see **grace** or **CHARIS**, which is a Greek greeting.

And then **peace** or **SHALOM** which is a Hebrew greeting.

God's love is open for Jews and Gentiles and as you read some of these letters that is exactly what you see.

Keep in mind that Jews and Gentiles did not get along. For the Jew, they believed that Father Abraham was there pulling all Jews out of the fires of Hell. But for the Gentiles, they were created to fuel the fires of Hell! So there was not a lot of love between them.

But now God steps in and brings that healing as Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:13-16, **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”**

God has brought that healing, and it is sad to me when I see Christians speaking evil of Jewish people. Christ has brought the healing and if they are not saved, then we should be praying for their salvation!

And like I have said, when Paul speaks of grace and peace it is always in that order, because you will never experience the peace of God until you first experience His grace, which is found in Jesus!

Think of it like this, ***“Grace extends to us a right standing with God. Peace is the byproduct. You can’t have peace without grace. It’s God’s grace that ushers us into His peace.”*** (Sandy Adams, I Corinthians 1:3)

Here’s the thing. Grace is not something that you can earn. It is not something that you can work and work to obtain.

The grace of God is a free gift, and we truly do not deserve it, but God extends that gift of grace to us through Jesus Christ.

And please understand this. Apart from coming to Christ, you are at war with God! And if you are at war with God, you will never experience His peace unless you come to Him and repent of your sins, asking Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life.

Once you experience the grace of God then you can enjoy the peace of God!

Let me show you what I mean, and these statistics are from several years ago. So it is even worse today.

We are told,

A former president of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and historians from England, Egypt, Germany, and India have come up with some startling information:

Since 3600 B.C. the world has known only 292 years of peace!

During this period there have been 14,351 wars, large and small, in which 3.64 billion people have been killed.

The value of the property destroyed would pay for a golden belt around the world 97.2 miles wide and 33 feet thick.

Since 650 B.C. there have also been 1656 arms races, only 16 of which have not ended in war.

The remainder ended in the economic collapse of the countries involved.

In 1555, Nicholas Ridley was burned at the stake because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of assistance and comfort.

Nicholas declined the offer and replied that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life. Because he knew the peace of God, he could rest in the strength of the everlasting arms of his Lord to meet his need. So can we!

- Source Unknown

True peace is found in Jesus and in the midst of the worst storms of life that come our way, we can rest in Him. We know we are saved because of His grace and thus, we can enjoy His peace!

If my salvation depended upon me, what I have done, am doing and will do, well, I am in trouble!

But this is a unilateral covenant that God has made with us, and it is based on the faithfulness of Jesus. In other words, it is a grace gift!

It is as Jesus said in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”**

And in John 16:33 Jesus also said, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

You see, it is not a peace that is found in the world.

It is not a peace because there is an absence of difficulty.

But it is a peace that is found in Jesus, and it is a peace through the storms of life as we rest in Him and that is something we can only receive as we surrender our lives to Jesus!

Look at what we saw this morning.

We saw – ***THE WILL OF GOD!***

God has plans for our lives, He has told us what He desires for us, and thus, we need to be obedient and obey the Lord!

We then looked at the fact that we are – ***SANCTIFIED IN CHRIST!***

God is working in our lives to make us more like Him. He does not just save us and then tell us – ***GOOD LUCK!***

No, His love is so rich and so deep that God works in us, and He will not stop until we go home to be with Him, for then the work will be completed!

And lastly, we looked at – ***GRACE AND PEACE!***

I pray that you can enjoy the grace and peace of God and remember, it is the grace of God that opens the door for us to be at peace with God and then enjoy that peace as we live out our faith!

I will close with these words from Paul in Romans 5:1-2, **“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”**

And The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“THEREFORE, SINCE we are justified (acquitted, declared righteous, and given a right standing with God) through faith, let us [grasp the fact that we] have [the peace of reconciliation to hold and to enjoy] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One). Through Him also we have [our] access (entrance, introduction) by faith into this grace (state of God's favor) in which we [firmly and safely] stand. And let us rejoice and exult in our hope of experiencing and enjoying the glory of God.”**

May we never forget that!

