

first CORINTHIANS

BEAUTIFUL MESS

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; **HOT MESS: week one: intro/background**

Small Groups: exploringhope@tworiverschurch.com (mondays @ 6:00pm).

In Acts 18, Paul travels from Athens to Corinth preaching the message of Jesus.

Paul first goes to the Jews living in Corinth, but when they would not accept the message of Jesus he went to the Gentiles. (anyone who is not Jewish)

Acts 18:7-11

⁷Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

⁹One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰For I am with you, and no one is going to

attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

Paul establishes a church in Corinth and stays there for 18 months. And I believe that Paul developed a natural affection for not only the Christians there but also for the people of Corinth.

Ancient Corinth was a Greek city with a population of about 650,000 people. It was located just off the Corinthian isthmus, which made it a crossroads for travelers and traders. It had two harbors and goods flowed through the city from Italy and Spain to the west and from Asia Minor, Phoenicia and Egypt to the east.

Like many large commercial cities, Corinth was a center for open and unbridled immorality. The worship of the greek god Aphrodite fostered prostitution in the name of religion.

At one time 1,000 sacred prostitutes served at the temple of Aphrodite. The immorality of Corinth became so widely known that the Greek verb “to Corinthianize” came to mean “to practice sexual immorality.”

Listen to what Paul writes to the church in

1 Corinthians 6:9b-11

Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Considering the kind of city that Corinth is, it's no wonder that Paul writes this truth to the church located there. It's a warning about all those vices which are present in such a place. But that's not the end of the passage, he goes on to say...

¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

So, when Paul mentions all these things which would keep someone from inheriting the kingdom of God, he's referring to those who are in the church! Not those who are still outside of Christ. To those who are in Christ he says, “That is what some of you were!”

You once were like this, but now through Christ, you are not like this any longer. You once were not going to inherit the kingdom of God, and now through Jesus, you will!

What I see in this church is what I think Paul also saw in these people, they were...

A BEAUTIFUL MESS

A couple years later Paul hears about what's going on in the church at Corinth and writes a letter to the church to address some problems which had come up since he left.

I really believe that the heart of this letter is love. Yes, Paul uses this letter to correct, but at the heart of this epistle is the love of Paul for the people of Corinth he had grown to know.

Over the next several months, even into next year we are going to study Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church. In it we will

find correction, rebuke, guidance, but the underlying message to this BEAUTIFUL MESS of a church is one thing... LOVE.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

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

²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

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

I love the way Paul opens most of his letters to the churches. ...

"Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

In a world of informal texts, emails and posts... this is a refreshingly formal and beautiful way to kickoff the letter to Corinth.

Paul wishes them God's grace, God's unmerited favor, nothing we deserve, not on our own merit, but given freely by God to those who believe... and that GRACE always leads to PEACE.

1 Corinthians 1:4-6

⁴I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Paul sees the good in the church. God has enriched them in "every way." In a way he confirms their goodness and their spirituality. He encourages them.

Before Paul points out their inadequacies, he makes sure they are aware of their strengths. Notice that their strengths are all rooted in who Christ is, not in who they are.

It is because of God's grace. Enriched because of who Jesus is and what he's doing in your lives.

That's a good reminder for us. Our strength is not in who we are, but in who Christ is in us and through us.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9

⁸He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And God will see us through to the end. Paul reminds the church that God is faithful. For those who are in fellowship with His son, God will be faithful to the end.

What a great promise. And this is just the greeting of the letter Paul writes.

Three quick things for us to takeaway from just the greeting of Paul's letter to Corinth...

GRACE IS **FOR EVERYONE**

1 Corinthians 1:2-3

²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, **together with all those everywhere** who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

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

The letter is written to the church in Corinth, but also to “all those everywhere.”

Paul's message is not just for Corinth, but for believers everywhere and for all time. That includes us.

The word sanctified means “set apart.”

That's what it means to be sanctified. To be set apart. God's grace is for everyone. We can all be set apart for God.

GIVE THANKS **FOR EACH OTHER**

1 Corinthians 1:4

⁴I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

Paul thanks God for the church at Corinth. Now we know that correction is coming, but Paul starts with Thanksgiving.

You think maybe we should start with Thanksgiving for each other. Instead of looking at our differences and faults, maybe we should look at the good in each other.

We are in a time of turmoil these days. Everyone is on edge and opinionated. And we are not going to agree.

Even still we should be thankful for each other.

Listen to what Paul says to the church at Philippi...

Philippians 1:3-6

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

There is a similar feeling for all the churches. And Paul is thankful for each one. And his encouragement is this... God will see you though.

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

What a beautiful promise.

You see when we see others the way God sees them, we will be thankful for each other.

LIVE WITH EXPECTATION

1 Corinthians 1:8-9

⁸He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is a promise that God will be faithful to the end. That we can remain in Christ until the Lord's return.

One day this world will end. Maybe soon. We can live with expectation of that reality.

I love the church at Corinth. They were not perfect. In a lot of ways, they were a beautiful mess.

But Paul says that God would be faithful to them to the end.

Here's what I love about this guy. He's admittedly a mess. He has kinda checked out of life and is struggling with substance abuse and depression. But it just takes one phone message to move him to heroism.

The documentary goes on to tell more of his story. He doesn't just go down to ground zero and give out water... he goes into

the rubble and saves people. He literally climbs down into a hole in the rubble and rescues three men trapped below.

All because his sister thought that's who he would be.

God has such amazing expectations for each of us. He believes in us. Even though the church in Corinth was a mess... they were a beautiful mess.

GRACE IS FOR EVERYONE

BE THANKFUL FOR EACH OTHER

GOD WILL SEE YOU THROUGH

SGL Questions:

1. What did you do with your 3 day weekend?
2. Paul writes a letter to the church in Corinth, to rebuke, encourage and correct. Why do you believe this was important to them? Is this something that is important for us today?
3. Our strength is not ours, but it is Gods strength in us. How have you experienced this in your life?
4. God pours out Grace on everyone. How do we as Christians show Grace to others around us?
5. For the follower of Jesus, you have been set apart. Read through Romans 6. What are some verses that shows us we are set apart?
6. We were created to do life together. How can we do better in our families, church, and our community?
7. Have you ever considered the expectations that you have as a follower of Jesus? What do you believe are some of those expectations? Are they reasonable? Do you feel the tension in having to live out those expectations?
8. Pray

