

1 Corinthians 1

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- [0 : 00] If you would, open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians. We're going to approach it a little bit differently tonight than you might be used to.
- We're going to look, in some ways, at all of 1 Corinthians. But don't worry, we're not going to look in much depth at any of it. We're going to look at one theme that keeps popping up throughout the entire letter.
- And we're going to do that by looking at snapshots throughout the letter. This is, in some ways, a great complement to what we heard this morning that Nick preached from Revelation.
- It was not intended by me, certainly, and Nick didn't know what I was going to be preaching on, but the Lord knows how to orchestrate things. This morning, we received a beautiful glimpse of the Lord Jesus.
- And we were given something very necessary for us. In our struggles, in our daily life. We were given a glimpse of what's happening now.
- [1 : 04] What is true with our Lord. And that's a promise for us as well, that we'll be with Him. But it also is necessary to look at the actual specifics of our dirty lives, of our struggles, the problems that we have personally, the problems that we have personally, in the church, at home, at work, and to see Jesus' beauty in those situations as well.
- And to see how His glory in heaven affects us in each of these mundane situations. And that's actually a lot of what 1 Corinthians is about.
- Paul is writing a letter to this church that had so many problems, so many issues that they were dealing with, queries that they had, things they were doing wrong, some things they were doing right, although not many, it seems.
- So their issues raised up in Paul a response. And he sent a letter to them trying to address them, trying to change the way they think about their situations.
- In some ways, our lives, every day, is like writing a letter to ourselves. Things come up, issues arise, questions come into our minds.
- [2 : 22] How do I handle this situation? What do I do? And we respond, we act, and we have a certain attitude. And that's like our letter to ourselves. Here, this is how you respond to this situation.
- So in a sense, we're doing what Paul is doing for the Corinthians. We're responding to our own problems. So let me ask you this in this way. If you could actually read your letter to yourself, how you look at your own life and issues, what would that letter look like?
- What would your responses to yourself be? And let me ask the question very specifically. What part would Jesus play in your letter to yourself?
- At work, at home, personally, at church? Does Jesus affect the entire letter? Does he affect every part of it? Now this is why I'm asking this question.
- As we look at 1 Corinthians, let me give you a few statistics, only a few, but it'll set this in perspective, what I'm about to mention to you all. In 1 Corinthians, Paul mentions Jesus, the name Jesus, the title Lord, or the title Christ.

- [3 : 33] He mentions one or the other of those, 230 times in that one letter to the church in Corinth, with all of their practical issues, 230 times.
- Now that's a bit misleading because sometimes he mentions them all together, our Lord Jesus Christ. So that's really only one reference, but it's three names. So here's a different statistic. 437 verses in 1 Corinthians.
- Out of 437 verses, Paul mentions Jesus in 98 verses. That's about one out of every four. In one out of every four statements, throughout the entire letter, Paul mentions Jesus.
- He says something about who he is, what he has done, what he continues to do, what he's going to do in the future. That's amazing focus. Every, well, this is the last statistic I'll give you.
- Every single issue in Corinth that is raised in the letter, every single one, Paul brings Jesus into it. There's not an issue, even his travel plans at the end, there's not an issue that he doesn't mention Jesus.
- [4 : 42] Sometimes, Jesus is the central focus of what will correct their problem or their question. Sometimes it's not, but he still makes his way into the issue.
- So, in Paul's letter to their very real, nitty-gritty situations, Jesus, the attractiveness of Jesus, makes his way into every single one.
- So, what about you? Do you think through life and the particulars of life in relation to the Lord Jesus? What would your letter look like to yourself? So, the way we're going to look at this right now is I'm going to mention each of the different issues that Corinth was facing and I'm going to say a few things about how Paul brought Jesus into this, brought Jesus to bear.
- Some of them I'm just going to mention in one or two sentences. Some of them we'll look at in a bit more detail. But keep in mind the main thing and that's the fact that Jesus is so wonderful that Paul can't help but talk about him in every situation.
- I want to give you a few of the examples first before we get into the first one which is really one of the bigger ones.
- [6 : 05] I mentioned Paul's travel plans in chapter 16. It's a very short statement but he simply says I'm going to come to you if the Lord permits, if the Lord allows, the Lord Jesus.
- Even traveling, he thinks about it in terms of Jesus' lordship that he has a call on Paul's life. He directs his steps. Something as personal as whom do you marry?
- Paul talks about that to the Corinthians and he mentions to some specific women he says marry whomever you want in the Lord. He throws that in there thinking about who you marry.
- He brings the Lord has got to play a part of this. He says it again in 2 Corinthians. He says don't be unequally yoked to someone. You have the Lord as your master of life.
- The Lord now dictates and forms your worldview. You follow him. Why are you going to yoke yourself? Put yourself under this two-part yoke with someone who's going opposite direction, with someone who denies your Lord and is not following him.
- [7 : 13] So even something like marriage which would take into consideration girlfriends and boyfriends as well, those who are heading towards marriage. Does the Lord affect how you think about romance?
- So that's another quick example. I'll mention two examples from 2 Corinthians and then we'll jump right into 1 Corinthians 1. In 2 Corinthians Paul mentions suffering and he only thinks about it in relation to the Lord Jesus.
- Our sufferings when we suffer for not for doing stupid and sinful things but the sufferings that come upon us, the troubles we have, Paul calls them sharing in Christ's sufferings.

That's how he looks at suffering. So when you or a friend of yours suffers, do you think about Jesus? Do you relate the Lord's suffering to theirs? And Paul says the Lord triumphed over suffering and that's our comfort too.

We get to share in Christ's comfort. So you see, he can't even think about suffering for other people without somehow thinking that Jesus is fundamental. I must think about Jesus.

[8 : 26] And the last one I'll mention, how about our own trustworthiness? Are you trustworthy? Do you say yes and no at the same time? Do you flip-flop back and forth?

Well, something like that. Do you contemplate Jesus when you think about your own trustworthiness? Well, Paul does. He says, you need to be trustworthy.

Not saying yes and no. Be like God. God is trustworthy because all of his promises he says yes to in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the faithful trustworthiness of God. God's promises, everything he said are yes in Jesus. Are you like that?

Do you keep your word? So you see again how something like trustworthiness and personal ethics, Paul has to think about them in relation to the Lord Jesus. So how about you?

[9 : 24] Would you write a letter to yourself about your own trustworthiness and bring Jesus into it? Okay, so turning into 1 Corinthians, the very first four chapters, Paul is dealing with boasting.

I'm sorry, I got ahead of myself. Let me tell you the three main types of problems in Corinth.

Then we'll get into the first one. Sorry about that. I should actually look at my notes sometime. He deals with three main types of problems. One type of problem is our issues of Christian interaction.

How you interact with your brothers and sisters. Specifically, how do you interact with your brothers and sisters with whom you disagree? And how do you interact with your brother or your sister who is sinning in a bold way and they're not repenting about it?

How do we interact with our brothers and sisters in those situations? So the question will be, do you, when you're faced with things like that, do you think about Jesus?

[10 : 35] How does he affect you? So that's one type, interacting with Christians. Another type, of problem is problems of personal morality.

And he mentions things like, how do I act in public in front of non-Christians? How do I act in private? He's specifically talking about sexuality there.

How do I act in marriage with my spouse and with my kids? How do I act at work to my boss, to my colleagues? How do I act as a single person?

How do I act when I disagree with Christians over what exactly is okay for a Christian to do? When I have a different opinion, how do I treat them? How do they treat me?

Every single one of these issues, Paul looks at in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do we? Do we think about Christ in that way? So that's the second type.

[11 : 36] And then the third type of issue that Paul deals with are issues of public worship. So things like this. When you meet together, and he deals with some very sticky issues in Corinth.

He deals with gender issues. How do men and women interact with the Lord in public worship and with each other in public worship? He talks about communion, the Lord's Supper.

How do we interact with each other in the Lord's Supper? And he talks about gifts of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is given certain gifts to different people, how do you do those in public?

Every single one of these issues, again, he talks about Jesus. Jesus forms the way that he thinks about these. At the very end, we're going to look at the last issue that he deals with, and that's the issue of future hope.

And that's all about Jesus. So, let me mention a few things about that first type, interacting with Christians, specifically Christians with whom you disagree.

[12 : 43] So think for a moment, if you would, get your mind, your own life into your mind right now. When you have a disagreement with someone, in Corinth, they were, some of them were saying, I follow this particular preacher.

He's a better preacher. Apollos was known for being a very good preacher. Peter, I follow Apollos. I like him. I stick with him. And others were saying, I follow Paul. He founded us. He's the father of this church.

Others, well, I follow Cephas, Peter. He was with the Lord Jesus himself. And others, I don't know if these were the best out of the bunch or the worst out of the bunch, they say, well, I follow Christ.

I don't know if that's arrogance or if that's genuine, a good response, but regardless, there are these battles within church. Do we have any battles within church?

Do we, in Bon Accord, disagree with each other in anything? Or is it all perfectly harmonious? If it's not perfectly harmonious, if we disagree with each other on smaller theological issues, on how to do certain things, does Jesus affect you in any way when you are standing face to face talking with the person with whom you disagree?

[13 : 57] Do you boast over them? I know I'm right. I know you're wrong. Do you have that attitude that just comes out? How does Jesus affect that attitude, that interaction?

Let me mention very quickly how Paul deals with that, how he mentions Jesus in those situations. I'm not going to mention everything because Paul mentions Jesus in that one situation.

I don't know, that's probably close to 20 times that he brings them up. So I'm going to summarize what he says about the Lord. He says, Jesus is more important than any teacher because Jesus was the one who was crucified for you, not any of us.

He, not anyone else, he is God's wisdom, God's power. He is the one who gives God's benefits to us. It is his knowledge, Jesus' knowledge, that helps us understand when we can't understand.

It is Jesus who causes churches to grow, not pastors, not teachers. Jesus is the one who causes growth. Jesus himself will judge everyone, and yet he'll also be the reason for salvation.

[15 : 12] Jesus owns us. So why are we trying to split his body? Why are we pulling and tugging tension in his body when he's the one who owns us?

So these are some examples of how Paul thinks through these very practical issues that we face too. So I'll simply leave you with the question in situations like this.

Situations like when the free church soon decides on introducing hymns and praise songs or sticking with psalter, musical instruments, things that people disagree about.

What is our attitude to people with whom we disagree? And how does Jesus affect our attitude? Jesus was so attractive to Paul that Paul couldn't help but think about him in that situation.

The next issue that Paul deals with in chapter 5 is about somebody in the church who is boldly sinning in a way that pagans don't even do.

[16 : 16] He's not repentant and the congregation isn't doing anything about it. So is this situation at all similar to what we go through? Hopefully no one is sinning as grossly as this guy did but what do you do when one of your friends, someone here, is sinning boldly?

Do you say anything about it? Do you deal with it? Do you turn a blind eye and just ignore it to let him or her continue in their sin? What do you do? So if you were writing a letter to yourself telling you, okay, this is what I'll do in that situation, do you mention Jesus?

How does he affect your understanding? Well, for Paul, he has some harsh things to say. He says, first, Jesus cleansed you and changed you.

But you're not supposed to be like that anymore. You're not supposed to sin in such a way. And then he says, by the power of Jesus, throw that man out. So he thinks that Jesus has something to say about throwing that person out of church.

By the power of Jesus, throw him out. Now, I do want to say one thing of warning, or clarify very, very specifically. Paul's talking in this situation about church, people who bear the name brother or sister who are sinning in such a way.

[17 : 44] He's not talking about people who are not Christians, who are sinning boldly and want to come into church. We're not to keep them away. We're not to throw them out. We're not to even demand repentance before they can come into our church.

We should welcome them. Paul's dealing with people who have claimed to follow Christ, but who are unrepentant and sinning grossly. And he says, Jesus has something to say about that situation.

Now, shifting into issues of personal morality. How do I live in public? How do I live in private? How do I view sex? How do I live in marriage, at work, as a single person, when I disagree with Christians on what's right and wrong to do?

Again, does Jesus affect you when you think through these things? So, let me focus on one particular one that's prevalent in our society and perhaps in our church as well, and that's our sexuality.

There were some people in that church who were going to prostitutes. They're being sexually immoral. Do we have anything like that in this church?

[19 : 01] In the body of Christ? Do you know of people who are such a way? Perhaps you yourself? There's one very, very sad thing that I learned a few years ago.

One study was done on a certain hotel. You know, hotels that sell late at night sell pornography. The people who are in the rooms, they can't just watch it for free.

Fortunately, they have to pay for it. Well, this study looked at that hotel, when did their sales of pornography go up? And there was a particular moment where their sales of pornography skyrocketed.

It was a pastor's conference that had come to the hotel. Now, there might be some other issues there, but it seems pretty clear that there's a problem with sexuality, not just in ancient Corinth, but that that continues today.

Does Jesus affect that situation in any way? When we are privately in our own homes or wrestling with issues about sexual morality, does Jesus affect us?

[20 : 11] Do we think about Him? Here are some of the ways that Paul talks about Him, and we're going to read one of these verses because it's so powerful. This is in chapter 6, so if you turn to 1 Corinthians 6.

Some of the things Jesus says, I'm going to list them off, and then the last one we're going to look at together. Jesus looks at the Corinthians through this letter, and He says, your body is meant for Jesus.

It's not meant for sexual immorality. That would include your eyes. Your eyes are not meant for sexual immorality. They're meant for Jesus. Jesus is the one who was raised, whose body was raised, so your body is going to be raised too.

You can either cling to a prostitute or some other form of sexuality. You can cling to improper sex, or you can cling to Jesus.

You can either cling to one or the other. Now this is the verse. Look at verse 19 and 20. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you received from God?

[21 : 37] You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body. So when you personally think about issues like this, personal sinning, it doesn't have to be sexual.

Here in Corinth it was, and it's a problem today. When you think about this, do you think about the fact that you are not your own? You don't have the right to do whatever you want with your own mind and body.

You belong to the Lord Jesus. He bought you at a very steep price. Do you think about Jesus when you're wrestling with some of these issues? So even with as attractive as sex is, as attractive as some other sins are, the Lord Jesus is so much more attractive.

So do you listen to that? Do you look at his beauty? There are a few other issues I'm going to mention just in one statement. I know there are big issues, and this is to stimulate your thoughts as you think through them more, but we simply can't look at all of them here.

Marriage and divorce. He mentions Jesus giving an actual command about this. Everyday situations of work. Paul can't help but think of Jesus.

[23 : 02] He says Jesus is the one who assigns you your situation. So our work is to be in relation to him. Again, he bought us. Choosing a spouse, we've already mentioned, in the Lord.

What about interacting with Christians who disagree with what is okay for a Christian to do? In Corinth, the specific issue was about pride again.

Those who said, it's okay for us to eat meat that's been sacrificed to idols. It's just meat. God created it anyway. And there were others who said, no, but that's wrong because that's been sacrificed to idols.

You shouldn't eat that. And there was this disagreement. And those who were eating it thought they were so much better. They were so much wiser. And they were really putting their weaker brothers and sisters in a very awkward situation.

How does Paul respond? How would you respond? Paul mentions Jesus again. Actually, a lot. In this one issue, he mentions Jesus over 20 times.

[24 : 06] He says, not only did Jesus help create everything, but he died, not just for you. He died for your brother and sister who you're offending.

That should mean something to you. The fact that Christ died for that person. You're gonna hurt that person for whom Christ died. And again, Paul brings up our personal rights.

You might have the right to do something. It's better, however, to set aside your own personal rights so as to honor the one for whom Christ has died.

So again, even personal rights that are so attractive in our society champion our right to do whatever we want. Even our personal rights are not nearly as attractive as who Jesus is and what Jesus has done and what Jesus continues to do for his people.

Do you think in such ways? Does the beauty of our Lord Jesus affect you? Now, perhaps I can say fortunately, we don't have much time for me to go into any detail on the three issues of public worship that are probably the most contentious issues that there are, but I am gonna mention them.

[25 : 21] And I might offend some people because we all disagree on some of these. But again, do we think about Jesus in light of our disagreements?

How does he affect our attitudes? The first issue in public worship that Paul deals with in 1 Corinthians is in chapter 11. Gender.

Men and women relating. Men and women worshiping together. And again, he brings Christ into this. Now, this is an argument where the main argument is not about Christ.

The main argument is about creation. But he still brings Jesus into it. He says, Jesus Christ is the head of every man. And man is the head of woman.

And God is the head of Christ. Christ. And that should affect the way that we worship publicly. And what he says it affects, he says, men, because Christ is your head, when you stand up to pray out loud and to prophesy out loud, when you stand up to do that, you should not be covering your heads.

[26 : 34] Now, I'm not gonna go into what that would mean in that day and age. It's simply the fact that because Christ is man's head, he should pray and prophesy in church in a certain way. It should affect how he does this.

And he says to women, he says, when you pray or prophesy in church, when you stand up to pray out loud and to prophesy, not preach, sorry, Paul says not to do that, when you prophesy and pray, you need to cover your heads.

Now, you see, I'm only gonna mention this, this is not an argument for ladies to wear hats to church. The only thing Paul says in this passage about women covering their heads is while they are praying and prophesying.

While they're not praying or prophesying, he says nothing about covering their heads. That's a confusion that we have today in some of our churches. But still, it's bringing Jesus in that is what I want to draw our attention to.

Because Paul says that even though there are differences between men and women, they're doing the same things in this situation, but they're doing it differently. But even though there are differences, men and women are not apart from each other.

[27 : 42] Women are not without men in the Lord. Men are not without women in the Lord. He brings the Lord in to unify the men and women in this situation where they do things slightly differently.

So I know that's a complex issue and I've probably caused more confusion than I've actually settled, but I'm trying to bring our attention very narrowly to the fact that even an issue like how men and women worship together, Paul can't help but talk about Jesus.

The next issue is communion. They were, they were, the rich people were getting drunk at the Lord's table and they were eating when the poor Christians didn't even have food or wine.

Again, there's interpersonal relations. I don't know if we have any situations quite like that, but you might be able to think of some in church where people are not quite treating each other properly.

The Lord Jesus is very important for that because it's one body that was broken for each of us. So we should all be treated fairly within this.

[28 : 54] One person's blood, excuse me, one person's blood was poured out for all of us. That should affect the way that we treat each other around the Lord's table.

And the last main issue of public worship are gifts from the Spirit. And here are a few ways that Paul mentions that Jesus is important.

The gifts that the Spirit gives to the people in the church, some of them are more glamorous than others. They all have a particular purpose no matter what they are. the purpose is for building the body of Jesus up.

So all of these gifts and fruit and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, no matter what they are, all of them, no matter what gift the Lord has given you, all of them need to be thought about in relation to Jesus because it's His body here that they're supposed to build up.

What's more, Paul says, all of these gifts are temporary. When Jesus is face to face with us, we're not going to need them. And these gifts are not even wanted in comparison with seeing Jesus face to face.

[30 : 18] So while we have them here, use them in a way that only builds up Jesus' body. And when they're gone, that's going to be better because we have the Lord Jesus face to face. And that leads on to the very final issue that He deals with.

And that's the last one I'm going to mention. And I'm going to close with this last one. It's future hope. So you've seen how, hopefully, in each of these practical issues, some very dirty issues, some complex issues, in all of them, Paul is so enamored with the Lord Jesus, with how He has cleansed us, with His work, and with what He continues to do, that he can't help but think about how Jesus applies to these situations.

And that deals with the last, that happens in the last issue especially, future hope. And I can't mention all the ways that Jesus affects us when we think about the future.

Because it's in every way that Jesus affects us about the future. Our hope is resting in the fact that Jesus has suffered, died, and triumphed.

Jesus has risen. He has a body that is glorious. When Paul compares Jesus' body of resurrection, even with Adam's body, how it was created perfect and sinless, there was nothing wrong with Adam's body.

[31 : 51] It was in glory, in fact, in some ways it had a certain glory. He compares that with Jesus' resurrected body, he says, that was just dusty compared to this heavenly glorious body that Jesus already has.

So us, when we are in these situations of problems, these situations that are so difficult to get our minds around, that we're constantly feeling our weakness and pain, the Lord Jesus has already triumphed in such a glorious way and we are going to be made like him one day.

When Jesus comes back, we will be transformed. We will be more glorious than Adam ever was before he sinned. We have an amazing hope, but it is only focused on the Lord Jesus.

So, if you were to write a letter to yourself, like Paul did for the Corinthian Christians, if you had these issues that raised up in life and you had to address them, to act in a certain way, to have a certain attitude, and you were writing a letter to yourself explaining how to act, what would that letter look like?

What part would Jesus play in the whole letter? But what part would Jesus play in every single aspect of the nitty gritty of your life?

[33 : 18] Now let's turn to this Lord Jesus in prayer. Amen.