

# We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord

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Date: 04 February 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now, we're going to spend some time together in the introductory words from Paul of 1 Corinthians, page 1144 of our church Bible.

We're going to read verses 1 to 9. As we think together about that statement, we believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, let's note together, even as we read, how often in which ways Paul describes Jesus, and we'll think together why that matters.

1 Corinthians chapter 1 at verse 1. Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and our brother Sosthenes, to 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.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus, for in Him you have been enriched in every way, with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge, God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift, as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 1 : 44 ] God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. We're going to begin this week, as we did last week, with a question, perhaps a question that you have had asked or you've heard debates about, are all religions basically the same?

Don't all roads lead to God? Don't all roads lead up the same mountain? So you may have heard that from a secular context, people without any religious background imagining that all religions are basically the same.

You sometimes find it from people from within religious backgrounds, trying to smooth over the differences that exist to create that idea that, well, so long as everyone is worshipping, we're all worshipping the same God.

I want us to ask the question, does that make sense? And to ask the question another way, what would Jesus say if He was asked the question, are all religions basically the same?

In John chapter 8 verse 42, Jesus said, if God were your Father, you would love Me. So there's a particular connection between the Father and the Son and how we should feel about the Father and the Son.

[ 3 : 06 ] John 14 verse 6 that we just read, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. And to go through all the Gospels, we would find Jesus making many exclusive claims, exclusive demands to loyalty.

And to read the New Testament, we begin to understand that without Jesus, the Bible says we're not worshipping the true God. Without Jesus, there is no Trinity.

Without Jesus, there is no final revelation from God. Without Jesus, there is no salvation. Without Jesus, there is no way back home to our God and Creator.

So to listen to the whole testimony of the Bible is to understand that true worship must be Christ-centred. And so it's really important to be precise, especially about the person and the work of Jesus.

Whenever you read, whenever we share the Apostles' Creed together, you maybe notice that there's so much of the Creed devoted to Jesus. Why is that? Because He is at the center.

[ 4 : 19 ] And there's so much confusion and misunderstanding that the Apostles' Creed helpfully clarifies for us. So when there are suggestions that good intentions is what matters, that being sincere as a worshipper is what it's all about, we need to understand from Scripture that it's no

value if we're not worshipping in and through the Lord Jesus.

When other religions say, well, Jesus was a good man, or a great man, or a wise guru, even if someone says He was a chosen by God man, that is no help for salvation or for worship.

So the Jesus we must worship and proclaim is Jesus Christ, God's only Son and our Lord. And that's why we read from the book of 1 Corinthians.

Because I think we have a lot to learn today from this letter and from what was happening in the church. So imagine, so Corinth was a large city, a significant city.

Imagine the church kind of around this size, maybe slightly larger. Imagine if we were the only Christians in this city. And in this city, we were surrounded by pagan worship everywhere.

[ 5 : 45 ] And in fact, until a few months ago, that had been our background. And the city was known for immorality, famous or infamous through the Roman Empire, for its wild living.

And in this city, there's competition and fighting, because everybody wants to be top dog and number one. And within this city, there's also the pressure of political rule claiming absolute loyalty on its citizens.

Welcome to Corinth. But in some ways, welcome to Edinburgh. The challenge that Paul faces as he writes this letter to these young Christians in Corinth, is that while the gospel is intended to both break down boundaries because of grace, but to establish boundaries, because God set apart people who are called to be holy, the boundaries between the church and the world is almost non-existent.

Worldly values have been accepted. And so Paul is writing to a church divided. See if you have time to read the letter of 1 Corinthians and read it through that lens of, here is a people who are divided.

You'll see it coming everywhere. The first four chapters, we discover they're divided over leadership. I think Paul's the best. I think Peter's the best. We are of the Jesus party.

[ 7 : 18 ] They're a church divided over sexual ethics. In chapter 5. In chapter 6, we understand they're divided because they're taking each other to courts of law.

They're divided over, what should we do about food offered to idols? Chapter 8. How should we practice public worship? Chapter 11. How do we exercise our spiritual gifts?

Chapters 12 and 13. They're even divided over how to understand the resurrection, as we discovered in chapter 15. And so Paul writes to this young church, this divided church, and he really gives them one answer to their division.

And the answer is Jesus. Takes them back to Jesus. To understand that he is everything. They're understanding the truth about who Jesus is, and the difference that Jesus makes is what will create a Christ-centered worshipping community.

That's where their holiness will come from. That's where their unity will come from. In the present, before the writing of Paul's letter, they're spotting the difference between the church and the world.

[ 8 : 37 ] It was like doing those Where's Wally puzzles. If you've done Where's Wally, you know you're looking really hard. It's really difficult to find Wally. It's really hard to spot because they all look kind of similar. What Paul calls the church towards is the kind of difference that's night and day.

And that can only happen as Christians are rooted in the gospel. And so what we're going to do is we're going to sort of focus in on Paul's introduction.

And then we're going to sort of zoom out together. We're going to consider the titles that he uses for Jesus. And then we're going to pan from Corinth towards Edinburgh and think about why we also need the same truths that Paul was sharing in Corinth.

The first thing to think about is the church's one foundation. Did you notice as we were reading these nine verses how often Jesus was mentioned?

Nine times in nine verses with a variety of titles. Let's read them again with that emphasis. It is verse one, Christ Jesus who called Paul.

[ 9 : 50 ] So they are to hear that the authority for this whole letter comes not from Paul, but it comes from Jesus Christ. Verse two, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus.

It is Christ Jesus who has set this church apart for God, who has made the church holy and has set them apart that they would call on His name in true worship, uniting them with everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse three, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This Jesus who gives grace and peace is co-equal with the Father.

That the undeserved love of God, right relationship with God, the flourishing of life from God comes from the Son as it comes from the Father.

It comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse four, I always thank my God for you because of His grace given you in Christ Jesus.

[ 11 : 02 ] Christ Jesus doesn't just give grace, He is God's gift of grace to the church. God's greatest gift is Himself in giving His Son to be our Savior, a gift to all who trust in Him.

Christ Jesus in verse five is the source of all their spiritual riches. That they are able to teach the Bible and share the Bible and encourage one another in their faith is down not to themselves and their own greatness, but to Jesus and His grace.

In verse six, we discover Jesus is the subject of Paul's teaching. God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

Remember, this was Paul who resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Chapter one, verse 30, Christ Jesus who has become for us wisdom from God.

That is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. Paul's message, Jesus is everything.

[ 12 : 20 ] Verse seven, we discover Jesus is the basis for Christian hope. Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

The same Lord Jesus Christ who gives spiritual gifts is the same Lord Jesus Christ who will return one day to finish the work of salvation, to establish God's kingdom, the kingdom of God on the earth, the earth as it is renewed.

In verse eight, he reminds this church that Jesus is the key figure in history. He will keep you firm to the end so that you'll be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The end of history, the beginning of the eternal reign of God is known as the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus is the one who both keeps and perfects His people and returns as judge and king to bring His people in the end into His kingdom.

Verse nine, God is faithful who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is God's Son.

[ 13 : 36 ] It is Jesus Christ, our Lord, who brings us fellowship with God. He is the subject of worship. He is the center of the church.

First Corinthians is an amazing letter for so many ways. One of the ways I think it's amazing is that Paul can be thankful for this church and see God's grace in this church where there's so much confusion and there's so much crazy stuff happening where if we were invited to write the letter, we would probably just tell them to stop it.

Just, what are you doing? But Paul celebrates grace and calls them back to the gospel. And Paul does another wonderful thing. He moves beyond the surface problems, divisions over leadership, divisions over public worship, divisions in the law court, to go to the heart issue, to say to the church, and we hear it so clearly in this introduction, what we need is to center and to re-center on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel that unites, the gospel that gives life, the foundation that needs to be built on is the reality that we are all one in Christ Jesus. What we boast about is not our intellect and skill and wisdom.

Our boast is to be in Jesus. How is the church to live, Paul? The church is to be holy in response to the call of Jesus.

[ 15 : 00 ] He has set us apart by His grace. How are we supposed to make our decisions, Paul? Your decisions are based on what's going to give most honor to the Lord Jesus.

So Paul is making really clear to this young church that the foundation for their life of faith is Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Now let's just slow down a little bit and think about each of these titles that Paul uses on numerous times to ask ourselves what are we to believe about Jesus?

Maybe you've been struck if you've walked or driven past the mosque up the road, they have the big banner Muslims believe in Jesus too. It's a really interesting way to communicate with the city, I think.

I imagine wanting to break barriers and create a talking point. But again, the question that we would need to ask, respectfully ask, is could they confess what we confess?

[16:07] Could they confess the Apostles' Creed? Could somebody from any other religion that has a high view of Jesus, but not an ultimate view of Jesus, could they confess what we confess?

And the answer is no. What makes Christianity unique is what the New Testament teaches to explain and defend that Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed one, He is God's Son, and He is the Lord.

But that sign up the road reminds us that in the post-Christian and multicultural city and society that we live in, not dissimilar in some ways to Corinth, we need to know precisely what we believe or better, who we believe in.

And we need to be ready to hold on to what makes us different, even if there is pressure from culture to try and flatten out the differences. And we need to graciously look for ways to both defend and share what we believe about Jesus.

So let's begin with that. We believe in Jesus. Whenever we hear the name Jesus, it reminds us that He is a real figure in history.

[17:23] This is the Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, who was raised in Nazareth, who worked with His Father as a carpenter, and then became a traveling preacher, the Jesus who was executed by the Roman authorities sometime around 30 AD.

This is the Jesus whose life was recorded in the history of the Gospels. Not unbiased accounts, but deliberately saying, this is what we have come to discover about Jesus.

And they wanted to persuade and to convert through these redemptive histories, showing Jesus at the center of the story of salvation. The figure in history also recorded in non-Christian sources, Jewish and Roman.

Historians make reference to the life, the death, and also that His followers believed in His resurrection. And of course, there is eyewitness testimony.

Paul was one who saw the risen Lord Jesus and was taught by Him. The apostles who wrote the Gospels bearing witness to His ministry and His miracles, His claims to be God, His death on the cross, His resurrection and ascension.

[18:39] The Jesus that we believe in is a historical figure. And we have accurate, eyewitness, reliable testimony in the New Testament to give us confidence in that figure.

Secondly, we believe in Jesus Christ. sometimes those two words come together so often that we might kind of just skip over, maybe even get confused and think, well, is this just a descriptor of who He is?

It's not a surname, but rather it's a title or a job description. And it's a job description that is loaded with information. So boys and girls, if I was to talk to you about a teacher and the job of a teacher, you'd probably have lots of ideas about what a teacher does because you've been in a classroom and you know they teach you numbers and they teach you how to write and to spell and they teach you geography and all kinds of information on different subjects.

They correct, they control, they do all kinds of things. When it comes to the Christ or the Messiah, we find His job description throughout the Old Testament.

Christ or Messiah means the anointed one, anointed by God, given a task. And the remarkable thing about the Lord Jesus is that all these various strands that we find in the Old Testament, all these hopes and longings and promises come together in this one man.

[20:16] Jesus the Christ. Let's mention, just for our own benefit, six expectations for God's Christ.

Firstly, that He is anointed in the sense that He is God's prophet, someone who speaks for God. John's Gospel begins describing Jesus as God's Word.

And when God the Father sends Jesus the Son into the world, He is God's final and decisive revelation to the world. And Jesus, the Word who became flesh, fully reveals God's will for our salvation.

Jesus speaks for God because He is God. So, He is anointed as prophet. But the New Testament also recognizes Jesus is our true priest or high priest.

So, in the Old Testament, we meet the priests and they represent the people before God. Principally, perhaps, we think of them offering sacrifices. And as we read the Gospels and as we read the New Testament letters, we recognize Jesus is understood both as the priest who represents us before God and the one who offers Himself as the perfect sacrifice.

[21:45] And in Hebrews chapter 7 to 10, we're reminded that Jesus in heaven still functions as our great high priest. What's Jesus doing now? He's interceding for us and He's sending the Spirit

to us and He's speaking through His Word.

And then Jesus is anointed in the sense that He is God's King with the authority of God to rule over us by His Word, the Gospel Word, by the Spirit.

And as a King, not only does He rule over us, He also defends and protects us so that when our faith is in Jesus, our salvation is secure. He is our great prophet, priest, and King.

But also we find within the Gospels reference to Jesus as the Son of David. At one place, it would be Luke chapter 18.

We'll get there in a few weeks. Blind Bartimaeus. Remember Bartimaeus, he hears that Jesus is walking by and he cries out, Son of David, have mercy on me.

[ 22 : 52 ] The great hope of Old Testament Israel, 2 Samuel 7, was that a king from the family line of David, would be established to rule and reign forever. Bartimaeus was blind, but he saw it.

And Jesus, in His teaching, says that He is the king, but perhaps not the kind of king that the people expected. He would bring in the glory of God in His reign, but it would be the glory of a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one.

And His kingdom wouldn't come instantly. It would be both a kingdom that would come now and there would be more to come. There's now and there's not yet. So He'd tell parables about the growth of the kingdom from a mustard seed until it became a great tree.

Or He'd tell parables about a king who goes away in a long journey and he delays on His return. So the kingdom is here, but we're still waiting Jesus' return when it will be brought in decisively.

But Jesus is recognized throughout the New Testament as the son of David, the promised king and saviour. Jesus is also the son of man.

[ 24 : 02 ] That was His favourite title He used of Himself. As He would say to Zacchaeus, again, we'll get there in a few weeks, the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

Who is the son of man in the Old Testament? He is this glorious figure. Daniel chapter 7, we meet Him in the throne room of heaven and God the Father gives Him glory and authority and eternal rule.

And the amazing thing, as Jesus says, He's the son of man and He claims that glory for Himself, He is also the one who comes near and shows compassion and suffers and substitutes Himself and sacrifices for our forgiveness.

And that takes us to another of those promises in the Old Testament that Jesus is the suffering servant. Perhaps this is where the people in Jesus' day often got Him wrong.

They were big on the glory part but struggled to see how suffering could be good news. He is the servant who brings this great hope of rescue and salvation, not by force of might but by the way of humble sacrifice.

[ 25 : 22 ] And so Jesus turned expectations upside down. Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One and His work for us is good news.

He is also God's only Son. He is Jesus, He is Christ, He is God's only Son. We thought about that last week when we thought about God and the Father Almighty, that God is the Father of believers by adoption.

That's such a wonderful, precious truth. That He loves us and invites us into His family. But uniquely, He is the Father of His Son from all eternity.

the testimony that the Father gives. We heard it as Jesus was baptized. This is my Son and I love Him. Or we can think about the testimony of John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[ 26 : 35 ] life. And we discover this mystery within the teaching of the New Testament. Something that's perhaps impossible for us to wrap our minds around.

That Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of the Father. That Jesus is always Son to His Father and the Father is always the Father to His Son.

There is no beginning to Jesus. He is eternally the Son. How does that work? We may never know. But we do need to know that Christ is the Son of God.

And that's clear in Scripture. He's not just a good man. Absolutely He was a good man but He was more than that. Not just a God inspired man.

He is God man. He's not just our moral example. Not just our great teacher to follow. He is the one who saves us as God.

[ 27 : 38 ] The one we worship. And that takes us to the last title that we hear a number of times in 1 Corinthians that He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is our Lord. The word Lord when the Greek Old Testament was being written. It's the same word that's used for God in the Old Testament.

To go back to John's Gospel he had a purpose statement as he wrote that Gospel. He wrote that we might believe that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and that by believing we might have life in His name.

And one of John's purposes as he writes is to show the uniqueness of Jesus. Remember those I am sayings where Jesus claims the name of God and the authority of God so that when we hear Jesus say to us follow me we understand that this is the Lord who is speaking to us.

Not a wise guru and not just a man this is the Lord who is speaking. And it's not surprising then that the first confession of the church was Jesus is Lord.

[ 29 : 05 ] If we go back to Corinth that's set against the background where they're beginning to hear the demands that they proclaim along with every other citizen Caesar is Lord.

These competing loyalties perhaps we recognize competing claims for our own heart and loyalty and worship and ultimately for the early Christian martyrs it was as they testified that Jesus is Lord. That's where the pressure came. That's where the persecution came. Paul's message to the Corinthians surrounded by the pressures of the Roman Empire was to live with Jesus Christ as Lord.

G.I. Packer to come much closer to our own day says that if Jesus is God the Son and the anointed Saviour King he has a right to rule us and we have no right to resist him.

It's the Lordship of Jesus and it reminds us just as we close that what we believe about Jesus matters. It's not incidental.

[ 30 : 28 ] We don't want to do Jesus a disservice we don't want to do other people a disservice by trying to airbrush out the differences and to suggest that well we're kind of all the same if we're worshipping some way.

If we are to take Jesus on his own terms thinking about what C.S. Lewis said borrowing from Rabbi Duncan who used to teach in the Free Church College if we take Jesus and his claims seriously we are left to conclude either he's a liar or he's a lunatic or he is indeed the Lord.

That's what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth Jesus is Lord therefore as God's people we should live in him uniting around him as our centre lifting him up and not ourselves living holy lives for the sake of his honour and not our own worshipping in ways that please him.

We need that same message always that we would have that same controlling centre for our church and for our individual Christian lives.

And as we thought about a lot of truths about Jesus let's just close by reminding ourselves that more than simply knowing truths Jesus Christ is Lord we must trust him and be able to say that Jesus Christ is my Lord and be ready to submit to him in worship and obedience and to live under his rule because he is God's son Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 32 : 18 ] Let's pray together.