

Called to be Holy: 1 Corinthians 1v1-9

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[0 : 00] Help us. Our Father God, we thank you for the church and for this church family.

We thank you for every person who is here and every family that is represented. We thank you for your love to us. We thank you for your kindness.

And Father, as we meet together like this and as we live together as your people, we want to become the kind of people you call us to be.

We want to be the kind of church that you say we should be, not what we think or what we decide. And so we pray for your help and your power to be at work within us, to show us who you are like and what you are like, so that we too become people who reflect you and people who show you to the world around us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. The problem with this church is...

[1 : 27] I wonder how would you complete that sentence? And please don't shout out. You can have a private word with me on the way out if you like. Well, whatever you think the problems are in this church, the problems in Corinth are very disturbing.

Have a look at chapter 3 and verse 1. Chapter 3, verse 1. Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly.

Mere infants in Christ. You see, this church in Corinth behaved more like the world around them than the Christ they claimed to follow.

And the problems were indeed very serious. Just look at verse 3 of chapter 3. You are still worldly, for since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly?

Are you not acting like mere men? But you know what? All that jealousy and quarrelling was just the tip of the iceberg. Have a look at chapter 5, verse 1.

[2 : 45] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and of a kind that does not occur even among the pagans.

A man has his father's wife. They were very serious problems. In fact, the problems were very, very deep. They were fighting with each other and they were suing each other, taking each other to court.

Have a look at chapter 6, verse 5. Chapter 6, verse 5. I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between yourselves?

But instead, one brother goes to law against another and this in front of unbelievers. So not only were they making a mess of their own lives, they were a bad witness to those around them.

And to cap it all off, their church services, gatherings just like this, were like a drunken feast. Have a look at chapter 11, verse 20.

[4 : 01] Chapter 11, verse 20. So he's describing a gathering when they come together. Verse 20, when you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat, so it's not communion or the Eucharist that you're sharing in together.

For as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. So this indeed was a very messy church.

Rather than look like Christ, they actually looked like the world around them. No wonder that Paul would tell them in no uncertain terms at the very end in chapter 15, verse 34.

He is absolutely crystal clear in what he says chapter 15, verse 34. Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning.

But let's not be too quick to point fingers. You see, this isn't just a Corinth problem. This is a church problem.

[5 : 19] It is a carigoline problem. Because we too are messy people. We also fail and fall. We also gossip and quarrel.

We get jealous with one another. We fall out with each other. We judge ourselves to be superior and others inferior. Our marriages are not always what they should be.

We mightn't sleep around, but we secretly watch porn. We mightn't turn up to church drunk, but it can happen when we're out with our friends.

The sad reality is church is messy. And we too, myself included, are messy people.

So what should we do with a church when its behaviour is actually more worldly than spiritual? Do we just shut it down?

[6 : 20] Say start again, tell everybody go home, that's it, that's the end, that's finished. What would Paul, or what would God, have to say to this church through Paul?

Well, go back to chapter 1 of Corinthians. Chapter 1 and verse 2. Look at what he says to this church.

Verse 2. To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified, and sanctified means to be made holy.

So to the church of God in Corinth, to those made holy in Christ Jesus, and called to be holy. Now isn't that amazing? We might not always look like the holy church of God, but that is what we are.

This messy church, with all its problems, beginning of verse 2, is still God's church. We are his holy people, set apart from him, or for him, and belonging to him.

[7 : 40] That's why Paul, knowing what the church was like, as he would go on to describe all the mess that was going on, and try to correct all the problems, he could still say this at the very beginning.

Look at verse 4. I always thank God for you. Isn't that amazing?

Despite all the ongoing struggles, and all the mess in our lives, we can still say, thank you to God, for the church, and for one another.

Because, we are loved by God, treasured by God, we are his people, the holy church of God. But, how can a messy church, be also, a holy church?

Because, the two things, seem in contradiction. There's a bit of a tension. On the one hand, we've just seen, what a mess they are. And then, at the very beginning, he's saying, you're a holy church.

[8 : 49] How can that be? How do you put those two things together? Well, we need reminded of two things. Here's the first one. First, we have been made holy.

Let's read verse two again, of chapter one. To the church of God, in Corinth, to those sanctified, in Christ Jesus.

Now, we often come across that word, sanctified, in the Bible. And it simply means, to be made clean, and to be made pure, deep within our lives.

In other words, it's to be made holy, so that we are acceptable to God. You see, throughout the Bible, God reveals himself, as the only one who is holy.

You start at the very beginning of the Bible, and very quickly, God introduces himself, as holy. We read it at the very beginning. He says, be holy because, I am holy. He declares himself, to be perfectly pure, in all that he is, and all that he does.

[10 : 01] He's perfect in love, perfect in goodness, perfect in his justice, perfect in mercy. He is absolutely pure. There is no fault, there is no blame, there is no sin, there is no evil, there is no wrong, he never gets cross.

Everything is perfectly pure, and good, and beautiful. That is what God is like. And he sets the standard, for perfection, and purity.

And because God is holy, that means, by nature, he cannot tolerate anything, or anyone that is unholy.

Holy and unholy, cannot mix together. They are distinct, they are separate. Just like oil and water, you can't mix the two, they can't be together.

And in the same way, God in his holiness is one, and we in our unholiness, are another. So that leaves, unholy people like you and me, separate from God, and under his pure judgment.

[11 : 17] But look what it says in verse 2. To the church of God, in Corinth, to those made holy, or sanctified, in Christ Jesus.

Christ, who is the God-man, God who became flesh and blood, and walked this earth, is perfectly pure. And he entered into our imperfect, impure world.

And Christ, who is holy, took on our unholiness on himself. And he has given to us, and he has given to us, his holiness, so that we are treated, as if we are holy.

I'm going to repeat that again, because that is central, to what it is to be made holy. Christ, who is holy, he came and took, our unholiness on himself, died on the cross, and took the blame, for our unholiness.

And in place of that, has given to us, his holiness, so that, we are treated, as if we are holy.

[12:30] Have a look at chapter 1, verse 30. It tells us there, chapter 1, verse 30, it is because of him, that is, it is because of God's work, not our work, God's work, it is because of him, that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us, wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

Through our faith in Jesus, we have been made clean, we have been washed, deep inside of us. Our sin has been dealt with, so that messy people, like you and me, are presented before God, as acceptable, and holy.

Now that, is something amazing. Messy me, in all my failures, and in all my falling, because of my faith in Jesus, am presented before God, and treated, as if, I am holy.

Now, incredibly, the work that God begins, in us like that, lasts forever. It doesn't just happen for a day, our faith in Jesus means, it happens for, an eternity.

Look at verse 8, of chapter 1. It tells us this, he will keep you strong, to the end, so that you will be blameless, and that word blameless, is connected to the word, holy, it's to be pure, to be right, before God.

[14:11] So, you will be blameless, on the day, of our Lord Jesus Christ. So when Jesus comes back again, on that day, you will be presented, as blameless, holy, pure, perfect, before him.

What God, has made, holy, if God has done, that work in you, you cannot be, made, unholy. If God, has made you, holy, you are kept, holy.

His cleansing work, in our lives, has an eternal, impact. Yes, we are messy people, but we are also, God's, holy people.

We are a, messy church, but God, has made us, his, holy church. That's incredible. Now, that doesn't mean, we ignore, all the sinful mess, and go, okay, I'm a messy person, God has made me, holy, doesn't matter how I live, I do whatever I like.

No, if we understand it correctly, being made, holy, also means, we begin to live, holy lives. Look at the rest, of verse two.

[15:29] We'll read it again. To the church of God, in Corinth, to those sanctified, or made holy, in Christ Jesus, and called, to be holy.

And in case you don't think, it applies to us, read the rest of the verse. We are called to be holy, together, with all those, everywhere, who call on the name, of the Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord, and ours.

So this is written, to the church then, but it applies, to every Christian, in every church, now. God has given us, his holiness, and now he calls us, to start living out, that holy life.

You're made holy, now go and be holy. Go and live, a holy life. There's a great scene, at the end of, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, that great series, by C.S. Lewis.

And those four characters, Peter, Susan, Lucy, and Edmund, at the very end, of that story, they've all arrived, at the great hall, of Kerr Paval. And as they arrive, they're met, by Aslan, the Lion.

[16:42] And this is, what it says. In the presence, of all their friends, and to the sound of trumpets, Aslan solemnly crowned them, and led them to their four thrones, amid deafening shouts of, Long live King Peter!

Long live Queen Susan! Long live King Edmund! Long live Queen Lucy! And then Aslan says, Once a king or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen.

Bear it well, sons of Adam. Bear it well, daughters of Eve. Now can you see the parallel? Hello?

God has welcomed us, into his family, and he has crowned us, if you like, with his holiness.

He has dressed us, and robed us, with his holiness. And once we are made, holy by God, always holy before God.

Now bear it well, sons of God. Bear it well, daughters of God. Live out your new life of holiness.

[18:00] You have been crowned with holiness. Now become what you have been made to be. Start living like Christ, and stop looking like the world.

And let's be clear, as to the calling of this, that doesn't just mean a little private aspect of a couple of hours on a Sunday morning. This calling to live a holy life covers every aspect of our life.

Let me give you just one pointer to that. Have a look at chapter 6, verse 19. Chapter 6, verse 19. So we're made holy, we're called to be holy, and this calling is covering every aspect of our lives. Look at chapter 6, verse 19. Do you not know that your body, so your physical body, as you're sitting there and I'm standing here, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the perfect, the perfect, pure Spirit of God.

Your body, your life, if you are a Christian, you are a home of the Holy, pure Spirit, your life. Who is in you, whom you have received from God.

[19 : 31] You are not your own. You don't belong to yourself anymore. You don't live your kind of way. You now belong to God. You're God's holy people. Verse 20.

You were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body. We've been made the holy people of God. We have become the home of the pure, perfect, Holy Spirit of God.

So now let us go out and live as the holy people of God. What a calling. What an amazing thing he has done for us.

But how do we actually live out this holy life? Because as I think about this, made holy, get that. Called to be holy, I get that. But how am I going to do it? Knowing what I am like. How am I actually going to start living that out?

[20 : 35] Well, thankfully, he does not leave us alone because what God begins, God continues, and he will finish. His work continues in our life. He gives us three resources to help us to live out a holy life as a holy church.

Here they are. Here's the first one. Three resources that we're given to live out a holy life. First, we are given the grace of Christ. Verse 4. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.

Sorry, we're back in chapter 1, verse 4. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. Grace, another good Bible word, is God's unconditional kindness which he has placed or put upon us.

So what is the grace that he's put upon us or placed on us? Look at verse 5. For in him you have been enriched in every way in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.

So this speaking and this knowledge refer to word gifts that he's going to talk about later. They're specific gifts given to us, word gifts, speaking and knowledge.

[21 : 52] But for now he wants us to know that Christ in his grace has placed upon us this great ability upon his people, the ability to know God's word and to teach God's word and to share God's word with each other.

You see, without the grace of God's word at work among us we will not be able to live as God's holy people because it is through the word that we become pure.

It is through the word that we become holy. It is as it goes into our lives and changes us that we become the people God calls us to be. So he says you've been enriched in speaking and in knowledge.

You have these amazing word gifts to teach and encourage and build each other up to become the holy people of God. That is the first resource that we have. So I want to encourage all of us to make it our priority to meet together on Sundays to come together as we do in our home groups on Wednesdays to come ready to speak God's word into each other's lives because as we speak God's word into each other's lives it changes us it transforms us it enables us to become holy and you can do that in my life and I can do that in your life.

So let's keep the word central to our lives this grace gift from God to help us to go on to be a holy church.

[23 : 27] So that's the first thing he's given us. Here's the second. He's given us gifts of the Spirit. Verse 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Again a wonderful resource a wonderful gift. He gives to his church all the gifts that they need. He doesn't shortchange us He gives as he determines He decides to each person what gifts they have and what the church has It's not our choice it's what God gives to us and so we are never ever lacking what God decides and what God determines is what is right and best for that church and for those people.

He gives gifts to his church but the purpose of all of those gifts is to enable us to be what we have been called to be.

He says we are called to be holy so the reason he gives us all of these gifts is so that we can become holy people. The gifts are not for our private use He will go on to speak about this at length in 11 to 14 but we have this gift given to us to the church for the purpose of building each other up so that we become more like Him holy and pure and right and all of that implies that this calling to be holy is a church project.

It goes on we are told in verse 7 until Jesus Christ is revealed so from now until Jesus returns He calls the church together He gives gifts upon His church and upon each person He places us together as we are and He says now start using your gifts amongst each other and for each other and through that gifting He moves us from messy people to holy people.

[25 : 36] The point being we cannot become holy in isolation we need one another that's why we meet together we cannot do it on our own we actually need each other and God's gifts to you are the people around you so He gives us the grace of Christ He gives us the gifts of the Spirit and here's the final resource we have the promise of God look at verse 8 He that is God will keep you strong to the end so that you will be blameless and there's that word we looked at again already blameless to be holy on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ the calling to be holy is great the fact of it can weigh us down that He would call me to be holy can crush me can overwhelm me as I look at who God is and what I am like and say how can I do it

I am such a messy person how can I do it well not only do we have the grace of Christ not only do we have the gifts of the Spirit to make it possible but God has given the church His people this amazing promise look at it in verse 9 God who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord is faithful the one who called you to be holy the one who's called you into fellowship and who's made you holy He is faithful that means He will not give up on us He will never disown us or abandon us as a church in our failures He will stick with you when you fall in sin He will pick you up the church belongs to God it is God's holy project

He's on a mission to take people like you and me and He is faithfully committed from now until eternity to make us holy and God is faithful we may be unfaithful but He is faithful He has promised to move us from messy church to holy church to be the people He calls us to be so what is our calling in life why are we here why do we exist we're called to be holy like God and in His goodness He has given us His grace He has given us His spirit He has given us His promise and most of all He's given us His Son the Lord Jesus Christ who's taken my unholiness and your unholiness and in His place has given

His holiness upon us so that we can be the people of God messy church but the holy church of God let's pray together I'm going to read a prayer this prayer you will find on the messy church holy church little booklet it's at the very end of it and you can see it afterwards but let's pray our Father God thank you that we have been made holy pure and blameless in your sight through the redeeming work of your Son Jesus Christ thank you that through our faith in Jesus we are forgiven all our messy past and present failures and are now called to live holy lives in this world by the power of your

Holy Spirit would you please help us to live lives that reflect you and honour you in our families schools and places of work please help us to deal with the sin in our lives to stand firm in the gospel to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord to make every effort to build up the church family with the sure and certain promise that God who called us is faithful and will keep us strong to the end we thank you for your word amen we're going to sing together a song which brings this theme to an end we are the temple of the Holy Spirit if you are a Christian God lives in you by his spirit and so we pray Holy Spirit living breath of God come renew my heart and make me whole cause your word to come alive in me give me passion for your purity

[31 : 14] Holy Spirit breathe new life in me let's stand together as we sing Holy Spirit living breath of God breathe new life into my willing soul let the presence of the risen Lord come renew my heart and make me whole cause your word to come alive in me give me faith for what I cannot see give me passion for your purity

Holy Spirit breathe new life in me Holy Spirit shall abide within may your joy be seen in all I do love enough to cover everything in its thoughts and deed and attitude kindness to the greatest and the least gentleness that flows the path of peace turn my life into works of grace and oh God show Christ in all I do so show your your power once again on earth cause your church to hunger for your way let the fragrance of the world lead us on the road to sacrifice let's pray father we thank you for all that we have and all that we can enjoy together we thank you for the work you have done in our

lives we thank you for your promise to go on doing that work and we pray that together as your people we would work together to that cause encouraging helping praying spurring one another on to live lives of holiness that reflect you to each other and to the world around us we pray this in your name amen so you