

God's Wisdom: True Gospel Church

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Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] Just to review, just to kind of review where we've been in 1 Corinthians, it's this strange sort of thing that's happening that basically, and I haven't said everything because there's so much to say about the Corinthians, but they are mixing truths that they're learning from the world with the gospel, and that is the foundational problem that's causing all of these issues within the church.

The truths of the world that they're adopting are things, basically, this concept that Greek philosophy that tells you, the rhetoric part of it, that something is true because of how it's said gets mixed with the gospel.

So what happens is other people come along besides Paul and Apollos and are teaching, and because these people are very skillful in their public speaking, these Christians are just taking it in. They're having no discernment whatsoever to discern between truth and a lie, and so because of that, they're holding on to some bad theology, which is causing division in the church, right?

That's the first four chapters because some people say, I'm of Paul, and some people say, I'm of Apollos, and so there's divisions because they're not holding on to the truth. But then there's depravity in the church.

[1 : 35] That's chapters 5 through 10, And in that depravity, you've got a guy who's having an affair with a stepmom.

You've got Christians taking each other to court, suing each other. You've got rampant divorce and remarriage. You have got people going to the pagan temples, because I don't know if you remember this, but in Corinth, there are 26 other pagan temples in the city.

Not just the church, but these other pagan temples, you know, temples to like the different Greek and Roman gods. And so some people are still going to these temples to eat at the festivals that they put on.

So all of this trouble that's going on in this church, Paul's writing this letter to try to solve the problem, and in the first four chapters, he's been hitting them with, he's going to hit them with eight different truths that help them understand that they've got to get rid of the division.

And we've seen five of them so far, so we have three left, and today the truth is about what a church is. And the reason that he's saying this is because it really comes as a warning shot across the bow, right?

[3 : 03] You know, like you've got a couple of ships out fighting in the water, and you put a shot across the bow to tell them, hey, you need to turn and be warned. That's what this passage is doing, is kind of giving that shot across the bow.

And it really gets to kind of the nature of the church, and it gets to our view of the church in the sense of how much importance do we put on the local church.

Now, you'll know probably from Scripture that when we talk about the church, there's two things we can talk about, right? There's the local church, and there's the universal church.

The universal church has no membership. It has no structure or hierarchy. It is just all of those that God has saved, both who have died and gone on to be with the Lord, those that are saved now, and those that are yet to be saved, right?

That's the church universal. I had this lady one time. She would call me every now and then, and she, this was years and years ago, 20 years ago.

[4 : 17] She would call me every now and then, and she would just say, I'm just so anxious. I just need you to pray for me. And I was like, well, what's wrong? And she would say, I just think they're watching me.

And I was like, what do you mean they're watching you? And she would say, well, I've been hearing about this universal church, and I know I haven't put my membership in there, and I'm afraid they're

watching me and they're out to get me.

I was like, oh, ma'am. This is not an organization. This is just, this is just a thing. So anyway, just don't think that there's a membership to this.

Are you okay, ma'am? Yeah, just drink a water. Okay. So we have the universal church, but we also have local churches. And this is a local church. That's a local church.

There's a couple other local churches in town. Each one is a local church. And what we're saying today and talking about today is about the local church. Okay. So this would be true of all local churches.

[5 : 17] And what we want to do is raise up our view of the church by looking at these three things that Paul says in verse 16 and 17. So let me read the passage for us.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

For God's temple is holy and you are that temple. Well, let's take a look then at the first reason we should have a high view of the church.

And that is that the church is the temple of God. The church is the temple of God. Now, the word church does not occur in verse 16 and 17, but he's talking about the church in verse 16 and 17.

And the reason we know this is because number one, verses nine through 15 was talking about the work done by Paul and Apollos as they sought to build the church.

[6 : 25] As a matter of fact, he says in verse nine, you are God's building, right? And I'm building you. I'm working to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and we're working to build you up.

The second thing is that it says in verse 16, he says, do you not know that you all, plural, that'd be another way of saying that is, don't you know y'all, y'all are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in y'all.

And if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is holy and y'all are that temple. And so when he's saying y'all are that temple, he's talking that local church is the temple of God.

Now there's another passage in 1 Corinthians, chapter six, verse 19 and 20, that talk about, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

Now that's a different thing. And that context for that passage is about sexual sin. And if you commit sexual sin, you sin against your own body. Do you not know that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit?

[7 : 44] So these two truths are true. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and I need to take care of this temple. But then all of us together as first Baptist, we're the temple of God.

Okay. So both of those things are true. Does that make sense? So with that, he's basically telling these people, you are the temple of God.

So when you think of the temple, what do you think of? Think of a building?

Think of a building? Probably Paul is talking about what's going on in the city with 26 other temples. Yeah, there's lots of temples and lots of gods, but you are the temple of God.

Kind of this uniqueness to them. But he's probably thinking about the Old Testament, right? He's probably thinking about the Old Testament where in Exodus and Leviticus, that they have the tabernacle, which was the temporary temple made like a tent, and then the actual temple that Solomon built, right?

[9 : 00] So think about this. What are some things about the Old Testament temple that are true? Things like that's where God met his people. That's where God lived among the people.

That's where God taught his people from as he had the priest teach. That's where you were going to go if you were going to find forgiveness.

You had to go to the temple. So in part, I think what Paul is saying is that you are the temple, and I think he's looking at that Old Testament temple, and then he says, you are where the Spirit dwells. The Spirit dwells here. In other words, saying that you, as a church, as a body of people, you are the temple, and God's Spirit dwells there.

So it's almost like he's taking this Old Testament image of the tabernacle, and the Shekinah glory comes in, sits in the Holy of Holies, and dwells there.

[10 : 04] He's saying, listen, that's who you are as a local congregation. As a matter of fact, what's interesting is that the word church, do you know where the word church came from?

It comes from the Old English kirk. Kirk. And the word kirk means house or building. But the original Greek word for church is ekklesia.

And it means a gathering. It means a congregation. It means a company of people. And so what he's saying is that when you Christians gather together, when you are the church, you are the temple of God.

When you are gathered together, you are the temple of God. And because of that, you can almost see that this is the place where God comes to dwell. This is the place where God's presence is felt. This is the place where forgiveness can be had, and where God teaches his people. So in other words, a local congregation is a temple of God where God comes to meet with his people, and his presence is expressed in a special way that's different from his presence with me as an individual. [11:39] Can I go walk down the hill, sit down by the river, and God be with me, and pray, and have relation with him? Absolutely. But can I have the same experience as when we gather together and God's presence comes here?

No. No, I can't. You remember the passage, right, where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst. Do you know that the context of that is not just about prayer, but it's about church discipline?

That if it's Matthew 18, if your brother sins against you, go show him his sin. If he doesn't listen, take two or three with you. If he doesn't listen to them, tell it to the church. If he doesn't listen to them, treat him as an outsider for where two or three are gathered in my name, agreeing on anything, I am there with them.

In other words, God's presence by his Holy Spirit is with the church, gathered in a special way, unlike anything else.

And that ought to give us this idea that our local church should be super important and vital to us.

[12:57] I had a friend of mine years ago when I was at the children's home in Glen Rose, and he had lost his job, and he had began the search for a new job, and this is kind of in that Glen Rose, Granberry area.

And we were attending the church, Grace Community Church, and I went to him, and I just kind of met with him for coffee and was just asking him about the whole process, and he said that he had had a job offer, and it was making as much as he was, if not a little bit more, but he was going to have to move to another city if he was going to take it.

And I said, well, are you going to take it? He says, no. And I said, why not? He says, because my church is here. In other words, he had learned the importance of the local church, that the local church needs to become so important to me that I'm willing to take a less-paying job to stay with a local church that I believe in and am connected to and believe is doing the right thing rather than just up and move.

Now, not everybody can do that. There's some things that might hinder somebody from doing that, but you can see the attitude that he had. He had a high view of his local church.

And if you can, as far as what we do, we need to try to have that high view of the local church. Yes. Yes. Yes. Well, asNING That's a great question.

[14:54] It's a really great question. It's actually the question back in history of the Reformation because the Roman Catholic Church called itself a church, and yet all the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church we know doesn't come from Scripture.

So the Reformers were constantly going like, no, this is what a church is, and they ended up coming up with three things. It has to be a place that's properly preaching the gospel, and by properly preaching it means that it also properly has the leadership that it needs, a proper administration of the ordinances and the sacraments, and the proper administration of the church discipline.

So proclaim the gospel, portray the gospel, protect the gospel, and so a little grouping of people could be a church if they are aiming towards bringing others in.

If this is just like a mom and dad with their kids, and they just want to meet together so they don't have to go to another church, then that would be something different. But if this is a couple of different families coming together, a couple of different people coming together because they want to see this grow, and they've got duly appointed leadership, right?

Because you can't have a church if you don't have leadership of that church, right? You're just a gathering of Christians. But a gathering of Christians could become a church by appointing leadership.

[16 : 33] Think about this. One of the commandments of Scripture is to obey your leaders for they look over your souls. Well, if this is just a bunch of Christians getting together and nobody is called out to be the pastor, then you don't really have a church.

Now, maybe they're headed that way, and they just need the time to grow a little bit more, and then somebody come in. And I don't think there's anything wrong with them not meeting with another church but meeting together in order to move that direction.

But if they're meeting together in order to say, we don't like any of these churches, and so we're just going to do our own thing, and no, we don't have any intention of becoming a church, then that's just called arrogance.

And they need to learn submission. And so does that make sense? So it's kind of a fine line. It's kind of a needle to thread in all of that.

But hopefully I can, hopefully I've done that. Any follow-ups? Is that... No? Okay. All right.

[17 : 44] So that's the first point then, is that the church is the temple of God. The second thing is the church is protected by God. Verse 17, he says, If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him.

So this is a warning. And you can almost see Paul looking at the Corinthians, looking at the division that they're causing, looking at all the trouble that they're causing, looking at the fact that they've got this guy who's having an affair with his stepmom, and they're not doing anything about it.

And you can get the sense that they are destroying this church. And so he's giving them the warning that says, Listen, you're destroying this church. And basically, you can destroy a church in two ways.

Right? You can cause this division in two ways. One, by false doctrine. Or two, by sinful behavior.

Right? False doctrine.

That's going to be something, as we get into Corinthians further and further, you're going to see that the Corinthians have false doctrine in chapter 15. They have someone teaching them that the resurrection at the end time has already happened.

[19 : 01] Matter of fact, the way to think about this is imagine if you believed that you had arrived in the final state and you were already right now in heaven and this was heaven.

Now, first of all, it would be very disappointing. But secondly, there were a lot of the women of the church who were holding on to that. So that's one of the reasons why they were divorcing their husbands because they felt like they had finally arrived in the end and could now have everything fully realized that God had been promising all along.

And it's like, well, it's not yet fulfilled. And so somebody was telling them, resurrection's already happened. So that false doctrine is what is destroying the Corinthian church.

But you can also destroy a church with sinful behavior. And there's several passages in the New Testament of talking about people sneaking in and taking advantage of people, leading people astray, and this kind of a thing.

And it reminded me, I served at a church one time. And you'll not believe this, but it's true. The pastor was having an affair with one of the women in the church.

[20 : 24] Now, this all happened before I got there. I came to serve at this church after all this happened. So the pastor was having an affair with a lady in the church, which then, obviously, that's a sin.

But also, the husband was super angry and was very sinful in his response to these things. On top of that, he was sexually harassing the secretary.

And while that's going on, the youth minister was embezzling money by paying for things for the church out of the benevolence fund from the ministerial alliance and getting reimbursed from the church for the expenditure.

And they stopped counting at \$40,000. Well, not only was that the case, but there were many of the families when they asked him to step down because the pastor just up and left and a new pastor came in.

The new pastor had to deal with the embezzling and he asked the guy to step down and when he was asked to step down, there were so many families going like, why? Why should he step down?

[21 : 32] He's a good guy. He just made a mistake. And you're kind of going like, like that makes my, that makes my eyes twitch. You know, it's like, what are you thinking? You know?

But the point is, is that these people were led astray by all of this sin that was going on and that church really struggled for a long time.

Well, the thing is, is that Paul's giving warning and saying, listen, God will protect his church. And all through the Old Testament, if you think about the pattern of the way that God does protect his people, sometimes he himself does it, but many times he uses other people to protect his people. You know, he used Joseph and Pharaoh to protect the people from famine. But he used nations. You know, so one nation would do something bad to the people of God and he would use another nation to punish that nation and then another nation to punish that nation and on and on it would go. By the time we get to the New Testament, well, as a matter of fact, let me just say this, God using other nations to punish was the subject matter of the prophecy of Habakkuk.

[22 : 45] Habakkuk couldn't understand, God, you're holy. How could you use these sinful nations this way, right? Well, by the time we get to the New Testament, God has given the sword of punishment to the government, not to the people of God, right?

The church does not bear the sword of punishment. We do not have, I mean, somebody could go stand on the street corner and say that Jesus is not God and the Holy Spirit is a devil and we might be angry at that, but we can't arrest them and put them in jail for that.

Not just because we live in America, but because that's not what God's Word tells us that we can do. We can't arrest that person according to God's Word because we're not the government. The government bears the sword.

So when we get into the church then, we say, well, how does God then protect the church now? He does it through what we call church discipline. That's what He gives us now in order to be able to protect the church of God is church discipline.

Hey, come on in. That's okay. We know how you are. So just, what I want to do is I want to go over then a little bit about church discipline and I'm just going to give you a real large picture of it because when we get to chapter 5, we'll come back to this idea of church discipline.

[24 : 09] Church discipline can be broken into two categories and what we have is we have self-discipline and church discipline.

Under self-discipline, one of the things that every member of a local church ought to do is have some self-discipline about them in order to avoid having to go towards any church discipline.

We need to take control of our own lives and take responsibility for our own spiritual growth. That's why we need to read the Bible. That's why we need to pray.

That's why we need to be under the preaching of the Word and in Bible studies and that's why we need to have that sort of discipline because we need to be sure we're obeying God because if you don't have that kind of self-discipline, if somebody comes along in church discipline to hold you accountable, you're not going to be accountable if you don't already have self-discipline.

But the other thing about self-discipline is that it kind of cuts down on a lot of things that sometimes need to be corrected if we just self-correct. I mean, just think about your kids, right?

[25 : 19] When you were raising your kids, once they got to the stage where they stopped walking in without brushing their teeth and you having to tell them to brush their teeth, they became self-disciplined so now you don't have to tell them anymore, go brush your teeth because now they just do it on their own.

There's a lot about the Christian life that ought to be handled in that way as well. We just need to grow up and do the things, you know? When we talk about church discipline then, shh, right here, it breaks into two categories.

The first is formative discipline. Formative discipline is positive. Formative discipline is when we take the Word of God and we teach God's people so they can change their mind, change their heart, change what they do, right?

Change the way they think, change the way they feel, change their actions. Formative discipline is happening right now. This is formative discipline.

I'm disciplining all of you right now. Formatively, right? Giving the positive word from the Lord so you know how to think. My whole point here is to raise our view of the church.

[26 : 33] So I'm teaching in such a way as to whatever your view of the church was, it just gets kicked up a notch, right? And that's formative discipline. That happens not only in this Bible study, it happens Sunday morning in the preaching of the Word, but it also happens when in households we read the Bible together, we challenge one another with things, we share about our quiet times and what we're learning from the Lord, when we memorize scripture together, when groups of men

decide to get together and have a time of prayer, a time of reading the Bible, when women say, you know, come over to my house, let's get together, let's pray.

All of those things are formative discipline. And one of the things that First Baptists could use more of is individuals within the church practicing formative discipline with one another.

This church could use a whole lot more people saying, hey, why don't you come over to my house and let's spend some time together in prayer? Or, hey, why don't you come over to my house and let's spend some time reading the word together?

Or, hey, let's meet for coffee and let's read a chapter of the Bible together. That's something that would help this church tremendously is if we spent more time in formative discipline.

Because I believe the more time in formative discipline, the less time in the second half, and that's corrective discipline. Corrective discipline is the kind of discipline in which we have to correct somebody.

[28 : 09] we either are correcting their thinking or the way their attitude about things or what they're doing. At a basic level, it happens sometimes while I'm preaching or while I'm teaching because I will say, hey, you need to do this or you need to stop doing that.

Right? I don't have any trouble in my teaching and preaching to say, hey, you need to stop that.

Right? I've said many times, I would stop that, do this. those are corrective measures, right?

But sometimes the corrective measures have to go further because you've got someone who's committed a sin and you go to them and you confront them and they have no desire to repent of this.

And I know, I talked to my grandmother years ago, she and I were talking about this, and she was telling me about how when she was a girl that the church was always disciplining somebody, and there was very few Sundays that there wasn't somebody who had to stand in front of the church and confess their sin to everybody and then be excommunicated from the church.

So when she and I started talking about this, she was like, oh, I'm against church discipline. I was like, well, I don't understand how you can be against church discipline, because it's in the Bible. But what she was really against was the abuse of church discipline.

[29 : 37] Because when we start to say, okay, here's a sin, we need to correct this, the Bible gives us a clear path as to how to do it and what our attitude is supposed to be as we do it.

And our attitude is supposed to be, we want to see this person redeemed. When God punished people in the Old Testament for messing with his people, there was no redemption to it.

But now that we as the church have the responsibility to protect the church, there's a redemption to that church discipline, to that corrective discipline, because we want to see them returned back to the Lord and redeemed.

So that's just a little bit about church discipline. That's about God. We ought to have this high view of the church because he protects his church, and we should protect the church as well.

The last reason to kind of have this high view of the church is that the church is holy. He says there in verse 17, he says, for God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

[30 : 49] Being very definite about this, you are that temple. holy. He's saying, since you are that temple, and that temple is holy, you are holy.

He's calling this gathering of Christians, of this local congregation, he's calling them holy. Now, here's my question.

Would you call the Corinthians holy? I mean, think about what they've got. they have divisions.

They're struggling to trust the power of the gospel. There's a man having an affair with his stepmom, and the church not only is not doing anything about it, but Paul says that they are proud of this.

They're taking each other to court and suing each other. We've already talked about the rampant divorce and remarriage. They're visiting pagan temples on feast days. Their worship is terrible and divisive, and they're showing partiality against the poor.

[31 : 57] They've got a messed up view of spiritual gifts so that some people think that they're more spiritual than other people because they have the gift of tongues. They have a wrong view of the resurrection, a wrong view of the end times.

This is a church that Paul then is saying, this messed up church, you are holy. That's crazy.

Think about what holy means. Right? The word holy literally means set apart, and there is in this idea of holiness this sort of purity, this righteousness.

holiness. You could even call it the otherness of God, or you could call it this, this, well, it's the one characteristic in all the Bible about God that's used in the trifold way, right?

Holy, holy, holy. There's nothing else about God that's ever used this way. And so God is holy, but now Paul is calling this church holy.

[33 : 12] How does the holiness of God come to be upon people? Through Jesus Christ. Right?

They're not holy in and of themselves. They're not holy because they're creatures. They're not holy because they're doing some things right while they're doing some things wrong.

They're holy because they've trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they're covered with his righteousness. That's the only way that any of us can be holy. And so because he's saying that they are holy, it is definitely a thing that they have to reckon with because he's not commanding.

There's no command to be holy. There's no demand to be holy. There's just a declaring that they're holy. It reminds me of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians when he says, for our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

And he's calling them this because, think about what's happening. They're destroying the church because of all of their divisiveness, and he wants them to have a high view of the church.

[34 : 30] So he's not saying this to congratulate them, but he's saying this to call them out of that divisiveness, out of that wrong doctrine, out of that depravity, to kind of live up to what it is that he says about them.

You almost see it this way, that if somebody were to come and mess with your family, mess with your house, mess with your bride, you wouldn't even think twice about defending and protecting. And so here's God who's not going to wink at anything, who's holy, and they're being called holy, it's kind of this moment that says, listen, you need to have a high regard for the church of God, and you need to start acting it.

And the truth is, is that as First Baptist Church, we are that holy temple as well. I think sometimes what happens is we begin to judge a church based upon its size, based upon its activity, based upon its circle of influence or impact.

We begin to judge a church by numbers, whether it's baptism numbers, attendance numbers, or financial numbers. But none of that is in consideration here.

[36 : 01] What's in consideration is that each of us individually have been saved by Christ. We've gathered together to be a church, rightly constituted under the Holy Spirit and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are his holy temple right here.

We're not saying anything bad about anybody else, but we need to understand who we are and have a high view of who we are, and it leads me to ask a couple of questions.

One is, how valuable is your local church to you? You don't have to answer that out loud. I'm just getting you to think, right?

And this local church has to be more than just the pastor. Pastors come and go, but the church is what remains. And so how valuable are the relationships that you have within this body?

When this body gathers together and you think about when you're scattered apart and on your own, do you value your brothers and sisters in Christ enough to say, hey, we need to get together.

[37 : 06] We need to show some hospitality. We need to have some times together. Do you love your local church? You know, it says in Ephesians that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

What's your love for the local church, for First Baptist, look like? And so it is important for us to think and have this high view of the church because that's what the Lord has.

And this is what Paul uses to kind of slap the Corinthians around just a little bit and say, you're not acting right. It's time for you to have this warning so that you can change and you can begin to have this right view of the church because then you'll stop all this mess where you're trying to destroy it.

Because you can't destroy something you love. You can't destroy something you love. If you destroy something, you don't love it. You can destroy something you love.

You can destroy something you love.