

# God Equips His Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. Welcome to our worship service as we gather to lift our hearts in praise to our Lord.

And it's a privilege for us to be part of this. And so thank you for the song leading, leading us in those songs where we verbalize what's inside.

And now as we move to the next phase to hear the Word of God directly, even though in song we hear it as well, and we sing and teach through song, but here it's direct teaching, which we call preaching.

So welcome, and if there's visitors in our midst, welcome here, and may the Lord bless each one. So we have, we're at new beginnings. We're starting the book of Corinthians this morning.

And me and Pastor Henry have made that decision to teach through 1st and 2nd Corinthians in the next time to come.

[ 1 : 14 ] And likely for most or all of the rest of this year will be in Corinthians, and bearing a few topicals here and there.

So, but I trust the Lord will bless us as we do this, as we look at this teaching. So when we think of the book of Corinthians, what comes to mind?

Carnal? Sick? Sin? Looking for another word.

Self. Self. It's all of that, right? As the book of Corinthians, the 1st Corinthians, the letter 1st Corinthians, addresses many, many issues in the church.

And unfortunately, those issues are still present with human society today. And so it's relevant, it's important that we go through this and study and apply how does this look for us today.

[ 2 : 39 ] But on the positive side, what other letter in the Bible has a letter, or like chapter 13, the love letter?

Or what other book teaches on the resurrection like Corinthians? Right? Where we'll be with the Lord forever. And that we'll be, our bodies will come out of the grave to get a new body.

So there are, there is some very sound teaching, addressing issues, but also of promise and hope as we work through this. So very, very appropriate book, I trust.

As we look at Corinth, the book of Corinthians, we see that God has planted a church in the world.

And now, Paul is writing a letter to get the world out of the church. So we plant churches in the world, and God spends the rest of our life trying to get the world out of us.

[ 3 : 59 ] Does that make sense? And as we wrestle with that, are we allowing God to have His way?

Are we surrendering to that process? So I think in a nutshell, if we describe this book, that's what's happened. A church plant, and then God is in the process of refining the church, making them more like Christ.

Taking the world out, so to speak. So I've titled the message, the introductory message to this series, God has equipped His church.

God has equipped His church. God has equipped His church. We're going to start with just a few thoughts on the church.

And George, if you would bring that map up, that would be good. Just give that a moment to come up and clarify.

[ 5 : 12 ] I realize it's quite detailed and far away for you, but I'm still going to point out a few things. It's easier for me to see up here.

So this is, of course, the Mediterranean Sea, the light blue, and the white is land. And I realize that's probably a bit hard to see from back there.

But this is Israel, right here. Jerusalem, the Mediterranean. And this is Asia Minor. Today it's Turkey.

And here's Ephesus and Philippi. And this is water and with land up around. And so we have Corinth right there and Athens right there.

And so they're both in Greece. And so Corinth was situated in kind of a very unique location.

[ 6 : 17 ] It was known to be a harbor, a safe haven for much of sea travel. And there's land coming down to there and then some fingers.

And then there's actually water in between here as well. It's hard for you guys to see. But there was an eight-kilometer stretch right there of land that separated the Mediterranean Sea with kind of a branch of the sea that was sheltered.

And they had an eight-kilometer stretch. And the Corinthians had thought to dig a canal through that stretch to allow ships to pass through and then harbor safely in the inlet and overwinter there.

And we hear of such in Paul's last journey to Rome as they tried to overwinter due to the storms, the violent storms on the Mediterranean. But they gave up on the idea of digging a canal for eight kilometers because it would have to be quite deep and big.

And what they did is they built a road and they would bring ships eight kilometers over land and harbor them in the inlet.

[ 7 : 40 ] And so thus, the city of Corinth, quite a very large city, believed to have about 700,000 people, quite, quite big, would be almost the equivalent of Edmonton today, ten times Grand Prairie.

And so, many people accumulating in this city and many travelers from all over, overwintering there and so on.

So it gives a very mixed pot of people from all backgrounds, religions, and different motives coming together in one place.

So that's Corinth. That's Corinth on the sea. They also had a temple, the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of Aphrodite, or the goddess of love.

And so they would do temple worship, worshiping a goddess of love or a sexual god. And so we have that coming, that flavor coming through in Paul's letter as he addresses some of this.

[ 9 : 02 ] And so this was a temple of worship to a goddess, a fertility goddess. And they were known to have like a thousand prostitutes working in the temple.

And so the men of Corinth would frequent the temple for their own, gratifying their own lusts and so on.

And so God planted a church smack in the middle of all this in the world.

And now, you know, that happened on Paul's second missionary journey. That's that line there, this one. And in roughly 19, or 19, the year 50.

Leave the 19 out. The year 50. And he writes this letter in 55 or 56. So in Acts chapter 18, we have, if we would read that, we won't this morning, but we have Paul on a second missionary journey stopping in Corinth.

[ 10 : 19 ] And he spent 18 months there teaching in this city. Many believers came through his teaching.

Many that committed their life to Christ. And so there's some background. But now only six, roughly six years later, Paul is writing this letter teaching them that the world needs to go.

And all that's around you, all the practices that don't line up with Scripture need to go. And so we have the rest of the book doing that for us.

So there's a bit of background. So as we look at the letter, thanks, George. You can take that off. As we look at the first nine verses, the first three are kind of an introduction.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother. So Paul writing along with a fellow believer. And Sosthenes is also mentioned in Acts 18.

[ 11 : 36 ] And he was, back then, a ruler of the synagogue. And as the city went into an uproar over Paul's teaching, it was Sosthenes that they beat up.

And Paul got away. And we can read that in Acts 18. And so, but here, Sosthenes is still with Paul. And they're together writing this letter.

Addressed in verse 2, to the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

And just a few thoughts out of verse 2 there. So to the church of God at Corinth. So just remembering, Corinth was known as the filth of the world.

The filth pot. Where all ideas and all practices of life came together. Now, ironically, God puts his finger on that place.

[ 12 : 51 ] I will establish my church. And not only that, he says, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, who are set apart for the Lord in this city, in Corinth.

And not only that, they are, ironically, called, help me out, saints.

They're called to be saints. That's their calling. They are saints. They are holy ones. They have been set apart by the Lord himself.

For his purposes, they belong to him. And I find it interesting that the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned over and over and over again in these nine verses.

At least five or six times. The Lord Jesus Christ is central here. Not Paul. It's not the people of Corinth or the church.

[ 14 : 14 ] It's the Lord establishing a church. And as we see the Lord Jesus Christ being used, a combination of those three words, let's just look at those three words quite quickly.

What does the word Lord mean? Lord Lord is this the church of God?

What does the word Lord mean? Master. Master.

You're right. And it depicts ownership. So if we call him Lord, he is my master. He owns me like his slave.

I belong to him. So Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus means the one who saves.

[ 15 : 21 ] Salvation. The master of salvation and Christ. Christ the anointed one.

So the master salvation anointed by God. And so God is the mastermind behind all of this. And so he has put forth this Jesus Christ our Lord as our Savior. And so he established this church. He died for this church.

And so to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints with all those who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord both theirs and ours.

And so we have to understand that to be sanctified and to be called saints means that in the Lord as children of God we are positionally saved and holy.

[ 16 : 34 ] God has planted his church. But in practice we are a work in process. And the Lord is trying to like I said get the world out of us.

It's called the process of sanctification. And let's quickly turn to Hebrews chapter 10. I think it's 10.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 14. It's a very nice summary verse of this. Hebrews 10 14.

For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. So for by one offering God has set apart made perfect those who are being made perfect.

so positionally and in practice. The two coming together in that way. And so we are called saints and yet none of us feel like saints because we look at our practice and our struggles.

[ 18 : 00 ] And here the Lord is doing that in Corinth but he's also doing that in Grand Prairie. that's why we're here.

And he's in process of cleaning us up taking the world out of us. So we need to recognize that.

This is the will of God for each one of us. Verse three grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace greetings from our Father. Salvation is by grace the gift of God.

And as we respond to salvation it is always followed by peace. The peace of God rules our hearts.

[ 19 : 03 ] Grace followed by peace. peace. It's a process that God has elected in his way to work. So grace and peace it's a greeting from God and then Paul gets into the meat of or starts into the meat of the letter.

So verse four I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus that you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that you come short in no gift eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ and so the next the first point that Paul here makes is the equipping of the church by the grace of God and he says through the grace given to you the grace given to you and by whom by Christ Jesus this grace by this grace he says you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and knowledge so looking at the church in

Corinth in this place of worldly turmoil we can use that term Paul affirms to them in his letter that you were established by Christ and not only established that you were enriched in everything in him not in ourselves in him and he's talking about spiritual gifts and he mentions too here in all utterance and all knowledge now utterance is by the mouth it's speaking it's teaching by the mouth verbally and where in all knowledge is understanding understanding

God's word and then able to bring it out and so he's telling this church in his absence that God has not missed you guys as far as missed out in gifting you he has gifted you in all that you need within the church and so as we apply that to us today has God gifted every local church is it true for Mountview has God gifted this body of believer in everything they need to function it's a question right do we believe that and if so where do you fit in where do

I fit in I think Paul was answering well I know he was answering a letter written by Chloe's household as we read in verse 11 and he's answering a lot of the concerns there but so Paul is dealing with Corinth and obviously there there was maybe a lack of people stepping forward to to to lead the church and to do the work of the ministry and so Paul affirms that you were enriched in everything by him in all utterance and all knowledge even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so you come short in no gift and so we we must believe that as a child of God that I am part of his program and that

[ 24 : 02 ] I too am gifted maybe not in utterances or in in complete understanding these are just two spiritual gifts that are mentioned here but the in chapter 12 we have more mentioned and Romans mentioned spiritual gifts we have to realize that as children of God God has not left me out you know there there has been a trend in evangelical churches in America that we look outside for our leaders that we put out an ad we're looking for pastors and we pay so and so much and we're looking for these qualifications and I read this and the

Bible and I struggle with that when God says I provided all the gifts within you so when we look outside we're saying Lord I'm not available I want somebody else to do that that's in essence what we're saying and yet God says I've gifted you you don't need to look outside you know our Bible schools I have a mixed feelings about them they have traditionally done a fairly good work of equipping or of teaching of training and yet they are on the slide as far as their quality of education and so on but why should the church entrust entrust our young people to go to get trained elsewhere is that not the purpose of the church do we realize that Bible schools came in because the church is not doing their job that's a fact

I mean I want to be careful with this schools are a good place where where we can get more intense I guess education more condensed and so on so I'm not totally opposed I had two years of Bible school as well and I'm thankful for that but beyond that my Bible education has been since I became a believer and we never stopped growing and so this is a very important point as Paul identifies that that we are to recognize that I am part of the local church where do I fit in where does God want to use me Dale pointed out our primary goal or vision as a church is to worship

God Psalm 105 another purpose or vision of the church is the other side is to go and make disciples to evangelize and we have a goal underneath that in order to do that we need to be taught and matured in Christ and we don't send a babe in Christ to the mission field but rather one that has matured and learned to walk and so all these things are important so like Corinth I don't know if I asked this not long ago but how many of us were born and raised in this area it wasn't that long ago there's about eight hands ten hands that went up the rest of us why did we come here

Pedro says for the dollar we came here for yeah for most of us it was for work it probably wasn't for hey this is the best place on earth to live we might find a warmer climate if we're looking for that but we came because there was an abundance of jobs you know what Corinth wasn't that much different people assembled there for livelihood and yet how many of you that have come here to work know that you want to stay here long term you know there's there's some hands that go up and some that hey I don't know I don't know but whether it is whether you are coming for six months to work which may turn into six years or ten years as it often does our our mindset needs to be what do

[ 30 : 23 ] I have to offer instead of don't learn to quite it's not worth my time to get involved because I don't know how long I'll be here see that does not fit in with the Lord's program man and so it's a deception and it's maybe a way for us to hide to God's calling for my life and so this morning the pews are a little emptier for whatever reason but as of late we've been very full and we realize that that we will either have to look at more services or doing a church plant in a neighboring community doing something but either scenario it's going to be calling more of you to direct service and then

God desires to mature and to equip for he is gifted he wants to bring those gifts out and so yeah in that way we are like Corinth we also bring our sinfulness with us that God is trying to eradicate and to remove from us and whether we want to identify with the Corinthians or not we're just as bad we are because we're human and so as we as we go through this letter I think the Lord will show us where we need to make application where he'll put his finger on our hearts in the right places as we look at this so then then as we finish off for this morning in verse seven so that you come short in no gift eagerly waiting for the revelation of our

Lord Jesus Christ so Paul is already stating the fact that the Corinthians are looking forward to Jesus coming now why would they be looking forward that's 1900 years ago or closer to 2000 it's the same reason that we are looking forward we want so you know first we are saved from the penalty of sin and then God saves us from the power of sin sanctification and ultimately from the presence of sin to take us out of here and every believer deep down has a desire to leave the sin filled world no more fight against our flesh it will be gone the

Corinthians in their environment were looking forward to it and so must we were looking ahead recognizing I get tired of fighting and of failing continual continual amen it's real it's real if it's not real in your life then you need to examine yourself do I belong to the Lord Jesus because the moment we give our heart to the Lord that struggle begins the last verse or the last two verse eight who will also confirm you to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son

Jesus Christ our Lord and as we as we look at these two verses the Lord Jesus the same Lord Jesus who saved you will also confirm you to the end now what does that mean what does that mean it means that if you are his child he will keep you and preserve you to the end of your earthly journey how many of us are able to maintain our salvation the number is zero and we need to acknowledge that we cannot we would like to but it's futile because it's based on human strength and I look at my track record behind me uh-uh there's no power there to maintain

[ 36 : 07 ] I fail the Lord keeps his own the Lord keeps his own and I want to look at a few scriptures Philippians 1 verse 6 you want to turn with me Philippians 1 6 this might be contrary to what you were taught growing up it's quite possible but the Bible is here the word of God and uh Philippians 1 and I'll back up to verse 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you always in every prayer of mine making requests for you all with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now and then Paul expresses he says being confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of

Jesus Christ who has started a work in you our Lord our Lord who gave you the Holy Spirit and he he will keep you to the end why because you now belong to him you are his possession and as much as we struggle with well how could God claim us when we're still not cleaned up and our lives are often messy this is the grace of God the love of God that he chose us in him in Jesus Christ and he will affirm us to the end to the day of

Jesus Christ when the battle will be done John 10 we'll do one more Gospel of John chapter 10 John 10 verse 27 to 30 he says my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand my father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand I and my father are one these are words of comfort words that give us peace as we realize the

Lord who I've committed myself to will keep me and protect me and when I go astray he will turn me back as Hebrews chapter 12 says whom he loves he disciplines chastises he brings us back and when we when we fail and follow our flesh the Lord brings us back through various trials through various means have we experienced that you're a child of God you have you have and so very very worthwhile teaching that we need to understand what's happening in my life so as as as Paul affirms the

Corinthians and he says who established you guys the Lord Jesus did by his grace he established you and he gifted you and and he will keep you and then the next verse for next for the next message he starts into the problems so he sets the foundation and affirms them and says the Lord will keep you but then he identifies issues and he starts to deal with them so the backdrop is we have an imperfect church that is perfect positionally but not in practice and that describes us this morning and so I trust that as we have that mindset that as we surrender to

[ 41 : 33 ] God he will work continually in each one of our lives to mature us I like what Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 11 if we are faithless he remains faithful he cannot deny himself God cannot go against who he is he is faithful he will keep you as we have committed ourselves to him so may the Lord bless us with these thoughts with these truths and may they equip us to go forward this week to serve him let's pray father we we thank you that we have a source of truth your word more than ever Lord we need truth to reveal to us the path that we are on to reveal our standing with you and what you are doing in our lives as we go through this book of

Corinthians I trust father you will teach us and you will reveal yourself further to us but you will also equip us and allow us to do the work of the ministry we thank you again we praise you in Jesus name Amen Amen Thank you.