

God Equips His Church

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning. Welcome to the worship service this morning. It's again good to see the house of the Lord filled up and the desire to fellowship together, the need to be encouraged to go out and serve for the coming week.
- So those are reasons why we're here, right? But for the family of God to fellowship is so good. And when we receive visitors, feedback that I often get is that, what do you do to get your people to stay back and visit after church?
- Because at our church, it's not like that. They all rush out the door. And so I want to encourage you in that. Others that come to visit, they're blessed by that.
- They see the fellowship. And so, yeah, there's no hurry to get home. So just a thought there. Julius mentioned the trip to the orphanages.
- And so this morning, I would like to put these people on the spot a little bit if I can. Who's planning on going on one of the two trips?
- [1 : 3 6] Kevin is going? Okay. Can I ask you to come up front? I'd like to pray with you and ask some questions.
- So who's all going? Everyone that's planning on going, come up front. Just come up on the stage here. Okay. And Justina is not here this morning.
- But she's planning on going as well. Justina Wolf, I think. Right? And so when are you leaving? Friday morning. And coming back?
- So one week. Eight days. Okay. And Tess, you're going on the second round and leaving? March 7th. March 7th and also a week. Okay.
- Yeah. So that way we can pray for them. And also, what are you hoping to learn or to gain by this experience? Any thoughts?
- [3 : 0 0] Okay. Okay. So just to give of yourself. Okay. Good. Anyone else? It's good to put people on the spot, right?
- So it would be lovely for us to hear back from a couple of you when you get back. What did you learn? And how has God opened your eyes or your hearts to more?
- And so with that, why don't we again just pray for them? Father, we thank you that you are a God of missions, that in your heart you long for everyone to come to you.
- And so this morning we're grateful that we have a group desiring to go and to serve in this orphanage. And also, Lord, just to give of themselves.
- Whether it's to helping the children or in doing renovations, whatever work you have, Lord. And we just pray, Father, that you would do a work not only in the orphans, but also in the hearts of everyone going.
- [4 : 1 5] And, Lord, that you would draw them closer to you as well. I pray for your protection upon them as they travel and your blessing as well. And so we commit them to you in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Amen. Thank you. Now, who else would like to go? Oh, yeah, we have lots of hands.

So there will be more opportunities down the road. Perhaps not to this place, but other mission places as well. Okay, we're continuing in Corinthians.

First Corinthians, as we begun last Sunday. And we're going to be in the passage that was read for us by Pedro.

So thank you for that. Now, as we look at this passage, how many of us have ever held a person on a pedestal?

[5 : 32] Okay. I don't think there was enough hands that went up. That we hold a person higher than we should. And what happens when we do that?

They fail. Thank you, Johnny. They will fail you.

And rightfully so. For we, none of us, are God. And so we cannot replace God.

It's never God's intention. So the message this morning is titled, Jesus or Your Pastor?

This is very real.

[6 : 34] And Paul addresses this bang on, head on. He does not sidestep. But he plows into this. And so we need to as well.

Who is the king of my life? Who do I have a relationship with? Who do I follow ultimately?

And if the answer is anything else but Jesus, then we are going off on a wrong path.

Then we are on a wrong path. I want us to re-read chapter 1, last week's message.

Read the first nine verses. And I want, I'm going to read them slowly. And so follow in your Bibles. And I want you to count how many times does Paul mention the Lord Jesus.

[7 : 45] Okay? The first nine verses. Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God and Sosthenes, our brother.

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 on the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, both theirs and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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. Who will also confirm you to the end that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ?

[9 : 00] God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. What's the answer?

Nine times. How many verses? Who is central? Jesus Christ.

Remember, the church in Corinth planted in the world. Who is central? Our Lord Jesus. And being a church planted in the world and having worldliness in the church, the next passage informs us that only a few years later, there's sex, there's divisions in the church.

And Paul hammers on it dead on. Now, notice our passage from 10 to 17.

I don't know if you noticed or not, but we are given a reverse order here. We're given the application or the answer, the remedy, and then the problem is described after.

[10 : 32] So it's in reverse order. In hermeneutics, we would first dwell on, what's the issue at hand and what's the solution? What's the application here?

So verse 10 dwells on the answer. And so therefore, this morning I'd like to skip verse 10 and deal with verse 11 on and then go back to verse 10 at the end.

And so look at the problem first. And so going to verse 11, For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions or divisions among you.

So Paul has got to hear. Paul's not there. He's not in Corinth. He's writing from elsewhere, but he's heard.

And he's heard from a lady in the church in Corinth, Chloe's household. Well, it doesn't even say that Chloe herself reported, but Paul got to hear.

[11 : 49] Now, is it interesting that Paul mentions her name? Is Paul out to get her in trouble?

Hey, you're tattling on your church. No, Paul is being transparent. He's being open.

And he's saying, I have heard, and here's where I've heard it from. And it's on good grounds that there are divisions, sects, or little groups in the congregation.

And then he further goes on to identify them. Now, I say this, that each of you says, I'm of Paul, I'm of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or fourthly, I'm of Christ.

I'm a follower of Paul, who did most of the Scripture reading and teaching, or Apollos. Now, who's Apollos? It's a name not quite as common, but let's turn and just look at that.

[13 : 08] Acts 18. And we'll just meet Apollos. And he's not really mentioned a lot again in Scripture. Acts 18, verse 24.

Acts 18, 24. Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

So we have Apollos. It says he was fervent. He's on fire. He's eloquent, so he can speak well. And he's real eager to preach the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is Apollos. Verse 26. And so he began to speak boldly. That's in Ephesus, in the synagogue. And when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

[14 : 30] So Apollos got some instruction here from another couple and kind of aligned him to be more truthful or more accurate in the Scriptures as he had only been taught in John's baptism and not in the baptism of the Spirit and the baptism of the believer.

And so instead of being offended, Apollos takes in this teaching, this correction, and he is on fire to continue just more accurately.

and so all of us grow in the Lord and when we start out as babes, we don't know a lot from the Scriptures.

Some of us grow faster than others, but we all are to grow one step at a time. And so it was with Apollos as well. And I'll read the last two verses, 27, 28.

And when he, Apollos, desired to cross into Achaia, the brethren wrote exhorting the disciples to receive him when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.

[15 : 52] For he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ. So a little bit about Apollos.

And he was able to stand his ground and refute or dispute with the Jews and prove you're wrong. From the Scriptures, you're wrong.

Jesus Christ is Lord. And so this is Apollos. And so we'll go back to Corinth now. Guess what's happened?

The church is divided and some are saying, I'm a follower of Paul.

I'm following Apollos. You guys are both wrong. I'm following Cephas. That's Peter. And then a fourth party, you guys are all out to lunch.

[16 : 57] I'm following Christ. And I claim Christ for myself. What's wrong with this picture?

What's happening? What's happening? they are looking to the messenger instead of to the master.

They're lifting men up instead of Jesus Christ who is the message that the men are preaching. I don't for a moment believe that Paul or Apollos or Peter taught a different gospel.

Not for one moment can we go there. They didn't. So how is it possible? Well, they have different styles, different personalities, different character.

And sometimes we are drawn to one versus the other. That is not necessarily wrong. But they were lifting these men up on a pedestal.

[18 : 35] And we have several examples in Scripture in Acts when the apostles and Paul and so on healed or so on and the people wanted to worship them.

And Paul tore his clothes in horror. It's not me, it's Jesus Christ. Don't do this, men. The words of Paul, don't do this.

It's our Lord Jesus Christ whom I too serve. And so we have this very sharp here in Corinthians. as we recognize that no human leader had one ounce to do with the plan of salvation.

Not one little bit. It is God through his son all the way. and God uses disciples, children, his children to proclaim that word and so we are never ever exhorted in Scripture to lift up our pastors on a pedestal.

That is wrong. the Lord sometimes or he does gift, he does give gifts, spiritual gifts, but as a fellow brother in the church given that responsibility to proclaim the gospel.

[20 : 26] Just so that we understand that very, very clearly. Paul goes on in verse 13, is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?

Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? You know, I baptize you in the name of Paul. No.

We baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, our triune God. God. So we all have that clear, right?

It is Jesus Christ who deserves the glory here, who is our God. Let's just pause a moment.

Now I want to hear from you, what are some reasons why Jesus needs to be central? what has qualified him to be central in your life?

[21 : 51] He saved you from your sin. And how did he do that? he died in your stead. That alone qualifies him to be number one in your life.

But let's add to that. What are some other reasons? That's the main one. He alone can forgive sins.

And it was a big point of contention in his earthly ministry. He could heal them. They were okay with that. But if he said their sins are forgiven, they had issues with that.

So Jesus alone forgives us. Why else does Jesus deserve to be central in your life? He created us.

Thank you. He is our master in that way as well. Blameless, without sin.

[23 : 07] sin. And we can add to that and then he became sin for me. Any other thoughts?

Why does Jesus deserve to be central? He's the gateway to heaven? Okay.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. no one shall enter, right? And come to the Father. There was another voice back there. Okay.

Thank you. He is the truth?

Okay. He is God. Period. Period. Yeah. He is God. Hebrews tells us that he can identify with us in every aspect.

[24 : 24] He was tempted in all points and yet remained pure. And so as the Lord of my life, I can come to him with everything in my life.

Because Jesus understands. Reasons why he deserves to be Lord. He will be the ultimate judge of all humanity.

And he will inherit the kingdom. And we will inherit with him. So just a few thoughts on Jesus as Lord as we try to repel human leaders taking that spot because they can't.

Paul goes on to address baptism or baptizing and I'll reread verse 13.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

[25 : 53] Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. You know, baptism is important.

Water baptism reflecting spiritual baptism is very important. And Paul is not saying at all that it isn't. But he is saying that to preach the word, to plant the seed, to bring others to the foot of the cross is way, way above baptizing them when they turn to Christ.

Christ. And in some of our culture, and I often hear that in traditional culture, that upon their funeral they were baptized by so-and-so.

And they lift up the name of the bishop who baptized that person. Paul, the greatest evangelist, he says, I don't have time for baptisms.

I'm busy preaching the word. I'll let somebody else do that. We need to keep perspective. baptism, the visible, the physical baptism is one that catches attention.

[27 : 34] And yes, we're joyous when we have baptism services and we should be, but far more greater joy that they have repented and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ than who is doing the baptizing.

So to take the emphasis off of leaders and putting it on Jesus Christ where it belongs. And so Paul comes out very clear with that.

He says, For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

So his purpose, Paul's purpose was not to baptize, but rather to preach the gospel. gospel, to be obedient to his Lord.

And so he had that very, very clear. As we bring this a bit closer home, divisions, we have countless divisions in the church today.

[28 : 54] I'm not talking Mount View now, I'm talking the global church. And let's just talk about a few of them.

And maybe you can add. And how many of you have heard the terms Christians and an Armenian, Jacob Armenian, or Arminius, or a Calvinist.

Those two men are mentioned more than any other in theology today. And after the Reformation, Jacob Arminius made a defense, a very strong defense, that man has free will and needs to choose God.

And with that, probably comes some error in that you're on a roller coaster, you can lose your salvation and gain it again, and back and forth.

John Calvin stood up and said that it's all in God's hand, he decides who is a believer and who is not. Now both of these are humans.

[30 : 24] We need this book. We need this book. Both of them are wrong. Or perhaps we have already lost some of the accuracy of their teaching over the years, but they're both, they're two extremes.

And they're causing more division in the church today than probably any two other names, and they're humans. I'm a Christian.

I follow the Word of God. And so we need to recognize that. And so these men influence how we think. They influence our worldview, how we think of eternity, how this all works.

Let's bring it even closer. What's a Mennonite? Mennonite? What's a Mennonite?

Following the teachings of Menno. And who is Mennon? Mennon Simons was was a Catholic priest that became a believer, converted to Christianity, and made a stand.

[31 : 59] And he made a stand. His biggest stand was that we baptize upon the confession of faith and not as infants. Okay?

When I read, when I've read a book of Mennon Simons, I would not fully agree with everything that he has taught. So why is it that we're called Mennonites, many of us?

How many of you know what Mennon Simons taught? Poquito? You know, we know very little, do we, of what Mennon actually taught?

So how come we're called Mennonites? It's become, it's become actually a cultural thing. Is it, is it right, when we talk about faith, to say, I'm a follower of Mennon?

Is that not what happened in Corinth? I'm a follower of Apollos, of Cephas? maybe I'll get a few arrows this morning.

[33 : 23] Maybe I'll get a few arrows this morning. we need to put things into perspective. If you want to treat the Mennonite culture as something of value, as long as it doesn't interfere with Scripture, it's not wrong.

But Mennon Simons cannot be the leader in your life. He cannot replace the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I'm confident that Mennon Simons would not be a happy character was he on earth today and saw what the Mennonites had become. Very likely he would be horrified.

How about the Mormons? They're following Joseph Smith and Brigham Young's teachings.

They're following men who are leading them off into error. And yet, they're all over the world. And we can go on.

[34 : 46] Today, is Catholicism lift up the Pope as the Christ here on earth. We're following humans and putting them up on a pedestal.

Jehovah's Witness, we've all had them at our doors. JWs, they're following human doctrine. Seventh-day Adventist, following the writings of Ellen White, human doctrine.

The Jews, many of the Orthodox Jews, are lifting up rabbinic or rabbis' teachings. Higher than the word of God.

that's my authority. And they're being led astray. And in today's world of online teaching, the list could go on and on and on.

And so, we need to be careful. we need to be careful with this. So, in Christ, we are unified, and with human leaders, we're divided.

[36 : 18] Every single time, it divides. And so, I'm glad that Paul plowed into this, and we need to just have an awareness of that as well, that we remain united.

So, whether you are of a Mennonite background, or of a French background, or whatever, it doesn't matter. In Christ, we are one.

We are unified. Because we have the same master. He's master of my life, and he should be master of your life.

Jesus Christ. So, Paul asked, is Christ divided? The answer is no.

Christ is never divided. But it's us as people that divide. as believers, as you witness, as you share, as you demonstrate the love of God to those around you, you know what tends to happen?

[37 : 48] You're Christ to them. in a dark world, they see the love of God, they may treat you as, elevate you a bit, and you're a type of Christ to them for a bit.

They look up to you, because you're modeling the Holy Spirit. And likely, you've had that role model in your life.

So when we share with others, when we work with others, we need to ensure that the focus is the Lord, and that I am only a vessel for Him.

For to draw attention to ourselves is un sinful and wrong. And yet, we can be, we can show the love of Christ as His ambassador to those around us.

And for a person, this is their first glimmer of hope, and you're giving them attention, they will lift you up. But make sure that doesn't stay there.

[39 : 19] Going back to verse 10, the answer, Now I plead with you, brethren, just stop right there.

What kind of authority did Paul have? did God as an apostle? God used him to write much of the Word of God.

You know what? He does not come down with a yardstick on the Corinthian church and say, you, so and so, stop, this is what you do.

He comes, he comes to them and he says, I plead with you, I beg you, I implore you. He's making himself vulnerable.

And so instead of coming across heavy-handed and hard of heart, he comes across gently. Excuse me.

[40 : 27] He comes across gently and exhorting them to think about this.

And so what is the plea? I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing. and to speak here is to teach, to practice, that we all are united in what we teach in regard to who is the head of the church, Jesus Christ.

That you all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, dissensions or separations, but rather that we have that clear.

But that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. And so rather than being divided, that we come together, that we not only speak or teach, but that we, in our mind, in our intellect, our understanding that we are united on who the Lord Jesus is.

And not only that, in the same judgment, the outcome of the mind. And as we start to put to practice, it says in the same judgment, or the viewpoint that we put out.

[42 : 10] So God, Paul is saying that that the church needs to be of one mind. And that we realize that all leaders are instruments of God.

And so to understand the background, in Paul's day, there was missionaries, pastors, traveling from church to church, spend a weekend here, a week there, a month there, teaching, exhorting, encouraging.

They would have a lot of visiting people coming through. And so it's so necessary that they spoke the same thing, not to gather followings after ourselves.

And so that's kind of the background here, but to be joined together in mind and judgment, the outliving of the mind. And so that is what is very, very important.

You know, I have so often run into religions that are uncomfortable with lifting up the name Jesus.

[43 : 33] Jesus. And even in Mennonite culture or teaching, we'll talk about God or the one upstairs, but Jesus Christ as being with me, as my Savior, there's a reluctance, a reluctance to mention his name.

in Bolivia we ran into this all the time. And we have here in Canada as well. We hold to God, but his son, his son is maybe also just an instrument of God and not God.

We need to be careful for Scripture puts Jesus up there. He is our everything. For homework, read Colossians chapter 1.

Read Colossians chapter 1. It'll affirm the rightful place of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I'm going to close with that verse.

Lord willing, we'll continue finishing the passage, the rest of chapter 1 next Sunday. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[45 : 19] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. In closing, if any of you have put me or anyone else on a pedestal, we're going to say it bluntly, shoot me down.

Because that's wrong. You are, if you are doing that, you're in for a fall.

Amen. Amen. Amen. The Lord Jesus is the one. That gives me the freedom to serve him.

That gives me the freedom to serve without pressures that I have to do so and so. Because that's what my congregation expects. That's called peer pressure.

Fear of man. But I need to be free to serve the Lord. And I can't be on a pedestal then.

[46 : 39] Neither can Pastor Henry or any of us. Doesn't need to be pastors, by the way. We can put others on pedestals as well. want to encourage you with that.

And that we go forward understanding that clearly. And who is Jesus to me? Let's pray. Let's pray. Jesus, your name is above all names.

You are the only one upon whom we can call to have our sins forgiven. Father, we praise you that you sent your son.

Amen. And even though, Lord, we don't fully grasp the Trinity, that concept, but we want to acknowledge this morning that you are God.

Jesus, you are God. And that the Holy Spirit also is God. May we pursue the relationship with you.

[48 : 01] as a bond slave to a master, knowing you've bought us, knowing that you died for us, and that you love us.

We thank you, Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.