

Why We Need 1 Corinthians // 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 January 2026

Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0:00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, we get the privilege of reading God's Word again.

So 1 Corinthians 1, verse 1. Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Word of the Lord. Please be seated.

One author begins one of his books on the New Testament and says, I would like to buy three dollars worth of gospel, please.

[1:37] Not too much, just enough to make me happy, but not so much gospel that I get addicted. The author continues along these lines and says, I would like just enough gospel to make sure my family is secure and my children are well behaved.

I would like just enough gospel to rescue me from hell, but I don't want so much gospel that it gets out of hand. I don't want so much gospel that I begin to love my enemies or increase my giving or begin to die to myself.

Now, I hope none of us would be so brash to say something like that, but all of us have been tempted to say it. I want just a bit of gospel.

I want to be happy. I want a few friends. I want a church to attend when I want to. But I don't want too much of it. I still want to keep most of my time for myself.

I want to keep most of my money for myself or at least spend it how I like. I want a few good friends, but I don't want friendships that get messy where I have to forgive those who hurt me, where I have to love those who are unlike me.

[3:01] I want to keep my life mainly for myself, so I would like \$3 worth of gospel, please.

This morning, we're going to begin a series on the book of 1 Corinthians that will take us at least until Advent. It contains some of the most thorough teaching on the resurrection, the spiritual gifts, marriage, and the foremost Christian virtue of love than the whole Bible.

It brings attention to the perils of pride, the emptiness of idolatry, the snare of sexual immorality with a vividness that you would think it was written yesterday.

But while it's a treasure, it is, as been said, no less difficult than it is valuable. For one, it's far removed from our world.

It takes us into a fallen worldly context. It's very different from our world. There's cultural things in this book that are hard to understand that we don't really understand completely in emphasis upon wisdom, upon law courts, upon men visiting prostitutes, meat markets, pagan worship, head coverings, and the baptism of the dead.

[4:28] What on earth is that? But it also continues a conversation which is difficult. It's clear the Apostle Paul is writing back to Corinth, responding to a letter they've written to him.

The problem is we don't have that letter. Nevertheless, 1 Corinthians has much to say to us. It speaks with astonishing clarity and relevance to the 21st century world.

Much of it revolves around Christians, or the Corinthians' failure to fully grasp the gospel. In many ways, they've settled for \$3 worth of gospel.

So the Apostle Paul is kind of calling them to buy more gospel. And our trouble is very similar. The 1 Corinthians makes an urgent appeal to us, to you.

Don't let the gospel remain fire insurance. Let it shape your identity, shape your ambitions, your marriage, your giving, your time, indeed, every bit of your life.

[5:31] And the Apostle Paul, in many ways, is saying, don't settle for \$3 worth of gospel. Take all that you have and buy as much gospel as you can get your hands on. And the appeal is not merely for us as individuals, but for us as a church, something we're called to do together.

If we could sum up, I could sum up the appeal of this letter that we'll unpack over months. It is, the church is to be one holy, cross-centered people devoted to the things of the Lord until the end of the age.

The church is to be one holy, cross-centered people devoted to the things of the Lord until the end of the age. But as we kind of dive into this book, this message is a little bit different than what is typical because we're going to do a bit more background information than we would normally do when we just tackle an individual text within an individual book.

And so some of those questions we have to ask and we got to answer. And the first one is, who wrote 1 Corinthians? Who wrote this book? It's clear, it's probably clear to you, it's a letter.

The first words we usually write in a letter are dear so-and-so. But Greek letters typically began with the name of the person writing. If you ever had to fumble to the end of a letter to find out who was writing to you, you understand how helpful that is.

[7:03] But it's even more helpful in a context where the letters would have been scrolls. And so this letter came in a scroll form and so it's very important for whoever's writing the letter to alert the reader of who is writing.

And so we see that immediately. Look down in your text. Almost formally there, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.

This is the apostle Paul. Now if you've studied much of the New Testament, you understand that when you begin to talk about authorship of individual letters, there's quite a controversy many times of who did or didn't write this letter and why they could or couldn't have written this letter.

But it's almost unanimous upon conservative and liberal scholars that this is the apostle Paul of Tarsus who was converted on the Damascus Road.

Why is it almost unanimous? Well there's so many details that Paul knows about this church that come out in this letter that make it clear that this is a very personal relationship that no one could fake.

[8:18] But notice what he says immediately as he introduces himself. He, you know, it's quite expected that he would introduce himself as an apostle because that's why he has authority to write to this church.

But he says, called by the will of God to be an apostle. Sometimes we talk about the call that we've received as merely the invitation we accepted or the decision we chose to make but that's not the way the apostle Paul talks here.

His accent is on the reality that he was called by the will of God that he indeed was called against his will. And if there was anyone saved against his will kicking and screaming in the New Testament, surely it's the apostle Paul.

His accent is on this reality. If you know the story I was thinking about Philippians 3 this morning, the apostle Paul was a Pharisee circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel.

That means he was of the family, the ethnic people, a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was trained by a very important Jewish scholar, not just recognized in the Bible but recognized in Jewish history in the first century Gamaliel.

[9:39] He was a Jew of Jews. And after Jesus was raised, Christians began telling others that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, the Messiah that was promised in 2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 9 and other places and Paul opposed them.

He persecuted them. He describes himself as a blasphemer, persecutor, an insolent opponent of the church of God.

He approved the execution of the first martyr of the Christian church. And he's on his way to Damascus to hunt down more people and to drag them back so they can get what they deserve for promoting this heresy.

Suddenly, a light from heaven, you probably know the story, a light from heaven surrounds him, knocks him down. The Lord appears to him, confronts him, and brings him to saving faith.

Johnny Cash wrote a book on Acts 9 and said, the man in black met the man in white on that road. You know Johnny, you know how the man in black meant so much to him.

[10:53] Well, that's what Paul was like. In so many ways, he thought he was light, a man of light, following all these rules and yet, with the dawning of the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ, he saw indeed how dead he was.

So Paul was brought to saving faith suddenly, unexpectedly, and against his will by the will of God and he never forgot it. I love the way he describes himself.

So in writing this letter, that probably his conversion was A.D. 31 or 32. This letter was written over 20 years later. Look at the way he describes himself in 1 Corinthians 15, 9.

He says, I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.

So 20 years after his conversion, though he's writing these letters, planting churches, he says, I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle.

[11:56] Ephesians, which we studied last year, the year before, five years after writing this letter to Corinth, he wrote the letter to the Ephesians. He said, to me, though I'm the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

So he goes from the least of the apostles to the least of all the saints. But it gets better. After this, in one of his final letters, writing from a Roman prison, 10 years after writing Ephesians, he says, the saying is trustworthy, deserving of full assurance that Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost.

And I love these texts together because this is what Paul thinks about when he thinks about himself. How do you think about yourself? It's a downward spiral of amazement. A downward spiral of amazement at the grace of God in rescuing him.

And so immediately, wonderful thing for us to consider is, is our amazement of being brought to life still growing? If we were honest, are we more and more perplexed at our conversion?

Or have we begun to be more and more convinced that we were a pretty good addition? I love it. Paul never forgot.

[13:32] Oh, man. That would be my dream for us as a church to never forget. To still remember what our hell-bound race felt like.

I was visiting with someone yesterday talking about, they're reminded of their first days of faith. I never want to forget it. And so the Apostle Paul sets it out for us.

But it's not as though the Apostle Paul climbed up the ivory tower and just soaked in all that God had done for him. No, he got to work. The story of the New Testament in many ways is a story telling the Herculean labors that the Apostle Paul made for the cause of Christ.

One author put it, Paul belongs to a small group of human beings of the last 2,000 years whose life and thought have made lasting changes on the world. The reality is most of us are going to die in 5 years, 10 years, 30 years, even if our family really loves us, we're going to be forgotten.

But what the Apostle Paul did with his life, he's one of the few individuals who's left the lasting effects on the world. The world has never been the same after the Apostle Paul.

[14:47] And it's not merely because he was a writer which he wrote 13 letters in the New Testament or a prophet or an apostle or an apologist or an orator or a theologian.

Although he is all of those things, the best theologian the church of God has ever produced, his massive effect on the world is because and perhaps especially because he was a pastor.

He planted 20 churches, not to mention the churches those churches planted. He planted churches mainly among Gentiles in the Gentile world, modern day Turkey and Greece.

One author believes he traveled 15,500 miles over a 20 year period on small boats or on foot. Actually a 30 year period.

So that means Paul averaged nearly 300 miles on small boats and 300 miles on foot and there were no such things as hokas.

[15:47] Back then, the apostle Paul is wearing sandals. Why? Because he's convinced that the greatest thing he can do with his life is plant and build and strengthen churches, little outposts of heaven.

This book brims with pastoral personal concern for the church he planted. This is not a disconnected apostle wearing a bishop's robe or something like that.

This is a pastor. We'll study next week but in verse 4, I give thanks to my God always for you. Later, he repeatedly says, do you not know?

Do you not know? It's just the appeals of a father saying, do you not know these things? Do you not know this is not the way it's supposed to be? Later, he says, I admonish you as my beloved children.

You have many guides in Christ but you have one father. It's not problems that holds together the book of 1 Corinthians.

[16:55] It's Paul's pastoral relationship. His love. So who wrote the book of 1 Corinthians? It is the apostle Paul. Point two, who were the Corinthians?

Who were the Corinthians? Now, after the person writing, Greek letters typically included the name of the person receiving the letter and it's true here. To the church of God that is in Corinth.

You see that in verse 2. Those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul's writing to the church, to the people of God gathered under the name of Jesus Christ in Corinth.

More than perhaps any book in the New Testament, the background of Corinth is vital for us to see. We must see what Corinth was like in the first century and you could describe it in three words.

It was new, wealthy, and wicked. It was a new city. Now, Corinth was not new in many ways. Dated back to the 10th century, Corinth was a Greek city and it began to rise up against Rome and against Sparta and then Rome came down and sacked Corinth in 146 B.C., destroyed it, horrible, burned it down.

[18:15] But in 44 B.C., which is the Corinth where Paul visited, Corinth was repopulated or refounded by Julius Caesar.

It was to be a Roman city in Greece. The Roman Empire was growing and so Rome established new colonies throughout the empire to extend its reach, spread its influence, and protect its borders.

As they established new colonies, it was common for Rome to populate those colonies with Romans. So they would send retiring military men there, freed men.

You see that in 1 Corinthians 7. It's referenced to freed men, former slaves that had been released and along with unsavory people that Rome didn't want around anymore.

Let's send them out to places like Corinth and have them populate that city. The effect was it was a city populated mainly by Romans and shaped by Roman values.

[19:17] There's so much we could say here but 1 Corinthians 16, 17 alerts us to the context of Rome when Paul says I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Archaicus because they have made up for your absence.

Each of those names are Latin names. You see that in the us at the end of all of them indicating that these men were Romans. So Corinth is a new city, a Roman city, an important city.

In 27 B.C. it becomes the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Corinth was also wealthy. So it's new, it's wealthy. Much of its wealth had to do with its strategic location.

I think we have a map here for you to help you see. It's a little small, isn't it? But you see over in this corner you see Achaia below Macedonia and you see Corinth kind of on top of this little bridge over that's to southern Greece.

So Corinth is on one side facing the Adriatic Sea and Sincrea is facing the Aegean Sea. And so right at that little strip right there was essentially a land bridge between two bodies of water.

[20:40] So this is very important for the wealth and the development of Corinth because when you came down the Aegean Sea to Sincrea you had two choices. You could sail 200 miles around the tip of southern Greece or you could drag your boat from Sincrea to Corinth and put it back in the water there.

Now it was an easy choice because the tip of Greece was known for its treacherous waters. That's in fact where the Apostle Paul had a shipwreck if you remember in the book of Acts on the island of Crete.

And so people would not make that trip around the tip of southern Greece. There was actually a parable that sailors would say if you went around the Cape of Malia that's what it's called you better prepare your will because you might die there.

So what happened is that Corinth became the hub between these areas. It controlled east and west trade and north and south trade and so around you can go and drop that down but around its

strategic location Corinth then prospered.

You can imagine a city where so many people are passing through whatever you wanted Corinth had. It was a shipbuilding center obviously repairing these ships building ships a center for numerous trades imports exports were passing through Corinth.

[22:15] It was rich in natural resources and land for farming natural springs throughout the city. It had a strong workforce with all these slaves that were sent from Rome.

It had a workforce ready to do these things with so many people coming in and out Corinth had a thriving service economy with hotels taverns entertainers shops and every two years it hosted the Isthmian games second only to the Olympic games so Corinth was a tourist attraction as well.

Corinth was a land of opportunity. If you've read about America and about the American West go west young man that's where you'll find opportunity. Well Corinth was like that.

People are going there to make a go for themselves and many people did quite well. there's a fragment found an archaeological fragment saying essentially those Corinthians they think they're so hot so cool they got all the things all their wealth you can imagine all the people around them didn't like them anymore they weren't this Greek city anymore they're dominated by Roman and Roman influence and Roman opulence but like most prosperous cities Corinth was wicked after all most people don't go to the big city for the Bible studies they go for anonymity right that's why people go to New Orleans or Vegas anonymity to do whatever you want because no one's looking over your shoulder anymore with all the travelers strangers tourists and sailors looking for a good night

Corinth became known for its wickedness for its immorality the immorality of Corinth is known in this letter Paul addresses just reprehensible sexual immorality as if any sexual immorality is not reprehensible but it's he says it's sexual immorality you wouldn't even imagine among pagans and yet it's in the church so the values of the culture had shaped this city and yet God caused a church to be planted there I love the way the apostle Paul looked down with me again in verse 2 he says to the church of God you Corinthians are so excited about all your things but this church is the church of God Corinth had people who called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ can you believe it Paul likely arrived in Corinth in February or March of AD 50 his stops in Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea were cut short he was driven out of town but in Corinth there was open door he stayed for 18 months teaching and preaching in Corinth he preached in the synagogue but was driven out then he preached to the Gentiles preached to this church that he loved as you might expect the first days of faith for the

[25:26] Corinthians were quite rocky they were fresh off the boat so to speak fresh off the boat of the world they needed to be instructed in everything they knew the language customs and culture of the world but not those of Jesus Christ now interestingly enough Paul has already written a letter to Corinth at this time he references in 1st Corinthians 5 the first letter he wrote so this is technically 2nd Corinthians this letter he wrote in AD 55 in response to their letter in response to what he's heard look down actually in verse 10 he says I appeal to you brothers by the name of the Lord Jesus that all of you agree actually verse 11 he says it's been reported to me by Chloe's people so apparently between Corinth and where he is at this time in Ephesus there's people going back and forth some of

Chloe's people maybe she's a business owner or something told him gave him a report so he's responding to a report and he's responding to their letter that's why he writes this letter in AD 55 point 3 why do we need 1st Corinthians that's a whole lot of stuff but why do we need this letter what's it all about and why do we need it you know Paul's concern for the church of Corinth as I've already said is he's concerned they've settled for \$3 worth of gospel interestingly enough in this letter he spends very little time unpacking the gospel justification forgiveness of sins these things he spends very little time explaining the core of the gospel but he spends lots of time explaining the implications the entailments of the gospel how the gospel is meant to cause you to live radically different lives and I believe that's why we need the book of

Corinthians in many ways we are not unlike the Corinthians or the church in Corinth we live in a culture that's becoming less and less Christian people come to faith and have more and more less and less understanding of what the Christian faith is of Christian teaching or history and are largely biblically illiterate sociologists and philosophers say this is only going to increase these nuns who have no affiliation with any religion that's what the first century Corinth was like and it's very similar to ours we live in a culture that also prizes freedom autonomy is prized above all no one tells me

who I am no one tells me what to do I am who I believe I am nowhere is that more evident than when we talk about sexuality and that's the way the Corinthians were and with all this freedom and autonomy with the opportunity to find your life on your decisions and choices we live in a culture that's in a free fall of idolatry people are looking everywhere for security and significance and the results are terrible it is a free fall into disaster 1 Corinthians is what we need

I believe it's a bold re-articulation of who we are whose we are where we're meant to find significance and security how we're to live in light of the gospel and we need to hear its message to be one holy cross centered people we need to see that we're called to be a cross centered people what I mean by saying is not merely that we believe the gospel God man sin response obviously we should believe the gospel but the gospel does not just secure our eternal life it's meant to turn our life upside down into alignment with God and his purposes we see this immediately the apostle Paul mentions Christ Jesus eleven times in these first ten verses he said to the church of God that is in Corinth sanctified in Christ called to be saints together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ he's alerting them to this reality that now that they're in Christ so many things have happened to them the gospel brings new life eternal life forgiveness of sins acceptance before God union with Christ but so much is not yet actually the way the apostle

Paul preaches in this gospel or in this letter he accents this reality that we stand in the age where so many things are true and yet so many things are not yet true we have a little simple graph for you promise I won't have graphs every week but it's a way the the new testament breaks out what's going on from a end times perspective this reality that the cross Jesus Christ has arrived and with him he has brought in the age to come that's the dotted line that comes over so so many things from the age to come have interrupted our life invaded our life forgiveness of sin eternal life acceptance with God spirit among us working among us and so there's these overlapping of the ages because now we're still waiting on him to return and the old testament person would have assumed the day of the Lord would be when the one time the Lord came and yet they see this overlap of the ages and it means so many things it means suffering continues it means

[31:23] Satan still prowls around like a roaring lion it means cancer still wrecks! lives but it also means that the virtues and values of the kingdom are not yet those of this world and one of the things the apostle Paul is going to do in this letter is to apply the values of the kingdom to this world it's really the book of 1st Corinthians is an ethic you know ethics is just the way you walk and so we talk about ethics well the way you're supposed to walk what is a biblical ethic well in many ways what the apostle Paul does in 1st Corinthians he applies a cross centered ethic so to this people proud of themselves proud of all they've got he confronts them and reveals this cross centered ethic he says it's only at the cross where we begin to see life rightly he says what's foolish in the world is wisdom what's weak is strong those rejected and despised may be the most honorable among you he says it's better to be defrauded than to win an argument with your brother better lose money than to win it's better to give up your right your liberty if it means welcoming and winning a brother he even says it's better not to get married and you're like what what are you talking about this is the apostle

Paul that says marriage points to Christ and the church husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her what he said his marriage is not ultimate as good and great as marriage can be when we love it when people get married it's not strong enough to last it's passing away too and so it's this cross-centered ethic to be a cross-centered people he also calls us in wonderful ways to be a holy people we see that immediately when he says church of God in Corinth to those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ the idea is the point is not read your Bible and pray every day that someone calls you a saint one day you know we say that she's such a saint he's such a saint the idea is the point is read your Bible and pray every day because you're a saint now it's stunning what he's saying you are already a saint a saint is not this title that is given to you after you climb up

Mother Teresa or something like that a saint is a title given to you because God has apprehended you in Jesus Christ he's grabbed you out of this world and thrown you into Christ gathered you up into him such that you belong to him that's what it means to be a saint I love it you were passing away you were in this world passing away going from death to death but God made you alive you're no longer in the kingdom of darkness you were transferred in the kingdom of his son and the apostle Paul was there when it went down can you imagine being there preaching the gospel these

worldly wicked people from Corinth coming to faith turning from idols to serve the living God one of the things I love in this letter is the exhortations ring ring not as a disconnected person but as a person who looked in their eyes if you've ever had a friend that strayed from the faith and been privileged to look them in the eyes and say

I was there that's not what happened to you you didn't walk like this look at what he says in 1 Corinthians 6 do not be deceived this is a barb at first you know neither sexual and moral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves I told you it's a blunt letter nor greedy nor the drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God and such were some of you what are they thinking they're remembering Paul's voice his presence his love for them you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the spirit of God so again and again through this letter he said don't be worldly don't go back to that what's up with that don't do that flee sexual immorality glorify

God with your you were bought with a price don't you remember flee idolatry all those things were written down so you would flee him glorify God don't lose sight of what happened to you don't lose sight of where it's all going don't lose sight of your call to be holy to follow the Lord several months ago my two older kids starred in the musical Matilda at our local art center it's a story I never knew the story but a story about a neglected child trying to get away from her self absorbed!

[36:52] parents to chase her dreams there's a reprise that occurs throughout the story you know like a lot of plays you can hear the same songs over and over again and deepen their significance as it goes one of the songs says when I grow up I will be tall enough to reach all the branches that I need to reach to climb the trees you get to climb when you're grown up and when I grow up I'll be smart enough to answer all the questions you need to know the answers to before you're grown up and when I grow up I'll be strong enough to carry all the heavy things you gotta haul around when you're grown up my wife and I wasn't the most supportive parent through the whole thing because they practice every day all day and I'm jealous for time with my kids but I went to the last show my wife and I went to the last show both my kids are singing these words on stage when I grow up when I grow up and it hits me like a ton of bricks they're growing up when did that happen you know like but you know that song captures so much of life doesn't it when we're eight we want to be ten we're ten we want to be thirteen thirteen we want to be sixteen and sixteen we're dying to get beyond sweet sixteen to be eighteen and then eighteen we want to be twenty one and we want to do all the things we get to do when we're grown up we want the house we want the car we want the kids and at some point when you're old like me you're like stop it

I don't want to grow up anymore no more wrinkles by my eyes please but in the Christian life what the apostle Paul is saying don't lose sight you've got to grow up you want to grow up you've got to press on it's not enough three dollars worth is not enough it's not enough to just get in it's not enough it will not satisfy you to stop at three dollars he's saying don't be satisfied you're the salt of the earth what happens to salt if it loses its saltiness it's only good to be trampled under people's feet you're the light of the world who takes a light and puts it under a basket no no no neither must your life be put under a basket to be on the stand why because you're to shine in this world that's what he's called you must not let your brilliance be snuffed out live as you're called glorify God run for the prize chase after this great

God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ and so we're to be a cross centered and a holy people and one people now there's a lot in this letter about unity about stopping this rivalry and factions and things like that and being one but that's not mainly my emphasis here I think there's a very important emphasis here on living in the local church living life with others there's no more teaching on the church in the New Testament there's greater teaching on the church in the New Testament in the book of 1 Corinthians than any other book even more than Ephesians right at the outset Paul recognizes that the church is universal he says to all those in every place who gather under the name or confess the name of our Lord Jesus Christ but the profound emphasis of this letter is on the church local ecclesia the word for church in Greek occurs 22 times in this letter 18 refer to the local church the idea this gathering of people known by one another you know they got inside secrets they've been together for a long time but they're gathering together to worship our Lord Jesus Christ many times 37 times Paul uses the word brother what's he emphasizing the idea that the church becomes a new family no longer brothers and sisters of different mothers brothers and sisters of one father our Lord Jesus Christ brought to life by one spirit called to walk together in obedience before the Lord in all this though the apostle Paul is not merely saying it's not good to go

alone now that's a biblical principle two are better than one ecclesiastes for but that's not merely what he's saying nor is he saying find your people find your tribe now there's a somewhat popular song that I've heard with the refrain you gotta find your people you gotta find your people you can't go in alone everybody needs help you gotta find your people then you find yourselves that's right right you gotta find your people but there's a dozen things wrong with that after all swingers find their people cults find their people you can find people that say things to you and lead you in the very wrong things it's not enough to find your people look what he said if you find your people you'll find yourself it's not enough to find your people if they're the wrong people you won't find anything but disaster could be tailgating for hell but there's another thing wrong when it says when you set out to find your people the accent remains on you what you like who you like who you want to be seen with who helps you it could be just a click but the bigger problem is that it's a chase after the ideal and ideals don't satisfy because ideals are idolatrous

Dietrich Bonhoeffer German theologian said years ago the enemy of community is the ideal because it's true when you find your people in a local church you don't find always find the people you want to be with you don't always find the people you want to be seen with you definitely don't always find the people that are easy to be around often times you find like Cole said a church full of sinners and the good news is you find yourself right at home because you are one too the idea is your identity was never meant to be based on what you find though your identity was meant to be based on who found you that's what's going on in these verses one of the most striking things of 1 Corinthians so in this very worldly context the apostle Paul alerts them again and again to the history of his dealings with his people this sexually immoral

[44:01] Gentile he's telling them again and again you're a part of God's story you've been rescued through Christ the Passover lamb 1 Corinthians 5 you are the temple now 1 Corinthians 6 you're the temple the temple in Jerusalem was still standing but Paul is saying you're the temple now you're replacing that temple your father passed under the cloud Moses by day passed through the sea all that was written before was written for you you're a part of this yes you sexually immoral scandalous Gentile people are a part of the people of God and so it has so much to teach us because identity is too grand a thing to be based on what you find and what you've gained identity is based on what you've received and been given by God through Christ and so the church is to be one holy cross-centered people devoted to the things of the Lord until the end of the age now after saying who is writing and who it's been written to

Paul greets the church in Corinth with a familiar greeting that he does throughout most of his letters look in verse 3 he says grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ grace and peace you know it's come to have such a wonderful ring for us right grace in many ways I love how he prefaces it grace sums up the gospel all of the riches of God through Christ freely given to you by faith hopelessly flawed people find complete acceptance by grace and peace what Paul's doing he's taking the Christian greeting and gathering it with a typical Jewish greeting peace or shalom not merely like peace not war let's all burn some candles or something like that the idea is completeness security blessing everything good you can imagine in many ways is gathered up into the word shalom and that's what Paul is doing and all of it from God and God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and so this letter is for us to give us grace and peace as we devote ourselves to the things of the Lord to the age to come let us pray Father in heaven thank you for the privilege of thinking on these things and Lord we do pray that you would open our eyes more and more over the next season in this book God come by your spirit work that which is pleasing in your sight cause us to love you more love your people more and live more devoted to you we need you we call to you cast ourselves onto you this day in Christ's name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at Trinity Grace Athens dot com