GOD'S Church

1 CORINTHIANS

HOW THE GOSPEL
CHANGES EVERYTHING



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Whilst Paul had planted and pastored (for some 18 months) the church in Corinth, they were now plagued by a range of leadership, moral, liturgical, and theological issues. In the face of worldliness and individualism, the church in (manifested in a wide range of issues for the church in Corinth!), Paul challenges the church to unity and holiness because the Gospel changes everything!

CONTEXT

Author: Paul was a serial church planter, having planted the church in Corinth and pastored it for 18 months. Paul first began his ministry in Corinth at the synagogue before moving on (due to fierce opposition and abuse) to focus on Gospel efforts with the Gentiles. In Acts 18, we read of some of the Gospel fruit experienced there by Paul:

Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptised. (Acts 18:7)

Now residing in Ephesus, Paul wrote to the Corinthians upon hearing reports about the Church in Corinth along with receiving a letter from some of them.

Date: The letter was written whilst Paul was in Ephesus (between AD 52-55).

Place: Roman Corinth was a melting-pot of religion and culture with Greeks, Syrians, Jews, and resettled Roman veterans. It was known for its wealth, but also the great disparity between rich and poor. There were dozens of pagan temples with some estimating that over 1000 temple prostitutes were employed. Corinth as a city was only 100 years old (at the time the letter was written), having been decimated by the Romans in 146BC, only for it to be declared a Roman colony by Julias Caesar 100 years later. Corinth was strategically located especially as a seaport and was the capital of Achaia (modern-day Greece).

KEY THEMES

- The Gospel: Paul reminds the Corinthians of the fundamental elements of the Gospel and their need to hold fast to it. Paul demonstrates to the Corinthians how the Gospel changes every aspect of their individual and community life.
- Holiness (Sexual Morality): With many scandals rocking Corinth, Paul addresses key issues systematically, especially concerning sexual immorality.
- Unity and Leadership: As members of the Body of Christ, the Corinthians are called not to follow leaders, but to follow Jesus. With various factions asserting the superiority of

their leader over another, Paul reminds the Corinthians that all follow Jesus alone. Division was manifested in numerous ways in the Corinthian church, including lawsuits, disagreements, problems with leadership, and economic disparity.

- Worship: There were several problems relating to the gathered worshipping life of the Corinthians, especially concerning the Lord's Supper (e.g., the disparity between the rich and poor, along with drunkenness) and general issues regarding order.
- Theological: The Corinthians faced a number of theological issues, especially that relating to the resurrection of the dead which Paul addresses directly.

SERIES OUTLINE

Week 1	To the Church in Corinth	1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Week 2	Preach Christ Crucified	1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5
Week 3	We Have the Mind of Christ	1 Corinthians 2:6-16
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Week 5	Fools for Christ	1 Corinthians 4:1-21
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Week 18	Stand Firm	1 Corinthians 16

Note: There will be a three-week break between Week 8 and 9 for our "Winter Warmer" Series on Psalm 18, 23, and 27.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Website: “First Corinthians” by the Bible Project: bibleproject.com/learn/1-corinthians/
- Book: “1 Corinthians: Holiness and Hope of a Rescued People” by Paul Barnett
- Book: “The First Letter to the Corinthians” by Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner
- 1 Corinthians Journal with text and space for reflection: https://bit.ly/3gYIqM9
- 1 Corinthians Overview: www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/1-corinthians/
- Course: “1 Corinthians” as part of the Ridley Certificate (6-week online course). (We’ll also be completing this in Term 2 of 2021 at St Bart’s as part of our Training Centre.) www.stbarts.com.au/ridley
- Access relevant books in the St Bart’s Library: www.librarycat.org/lib/stbart/search/tag/1+Corinthians

FOR FAMILIES

- For each week in the series, access helpful resources for households and for use in churches. Visit: www.stbartskids.org
- Bookmark Reading Plan for Families (Weeks 1-9): https://bit.ly/3uoz4gs

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WEEK 1: To the Church in Corinth

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge — God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 1 Corinthians 1:4-6

BIG IDEA

As Paul writes to the church that he planted and pastored, he first reminds them of who they are: called by God, supplied with Gifts, and kept blameless because of Jesus. They are God's beloved church! It's imperative that the Corinthian church be clear that their identity is secure in Jesus, lest they get distracted following other idols (be they leaders, wealth, or other religions) and in order that they can confidently take heed of the challenges from Paul which will follow.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How had the church in Corinth made a mess of things? Yet, how does Paul speak of it?
- What was the city of Corinth like? What was the history of Paul's connection to Corinth?
- How is being called by God to be his church fundamental to our ultimate identity?
- In what way does Paul say that the Corinthian church (and us!) have been enriched?
- What does it mean for God to keep us firm? In what way will we be kept blameless?
- How does belonging to Jesus shape your identity on one of your frontlines?

WEEK 2: Preach Christ Crucified

1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."
1 Corinthians 1:18-19

BIG IDEA

Division - caused by a following of one leader over another - was a significant issue in the Church of Corinth. There was a popularity contest going on in which people were making the foolish error of their discipleship being bound up in a particular human leader rather than being fundamentally grounded in the Lord Jesus. Paul challenges the Corinthians not to follow him (or any other leader), but to keep their eyes on the crucified and risen Jesus. Paul challenges the Corinthians that true wisdom is found not in particular people, regardless of how impressive they may be, but only in the cross of Christ. It is in Jesus we find our real identity, true wisdom, and the message to be proclaimed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does it look like for God's church to be unified? Who ultimately unites us?
- Can we ever be tempted to follow church leaders? How can we avoid this temptation?
- How does God's wisdom make the wisdom of this world foolish?
- Is there anything that we can boast in when it comes to our salvation?
- In what way did Paul come to the Corinthians? What was the centre of his message? How did he communicate this?

WEEK 3: We Have the Mind of Christ:

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 1 Corinthians 2:6-7

BIG IDEA

Paul wants the Corinthians to *recognise* that there are two distinct types of wisdom in operation in the world: that from God which is destined for glory (as *revealed* by the cross) and that of the world (i.e., the rules of this age) which is destined for demise. Paul says that whilst the wisdom of God was hidden, it has now been revealed through the Lord Jesus and that we can know such wisdom, not because of our own might, intellect, or insight, but because of the power of the Holy Spirit. Wherever we seek to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, we're not doing so by our own prerogative or power, but simply joining in how the Spirit is already at work.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- In what way has God's wisdom been declared plainly for all to see?
- How is it evident that the 'rulers of this age' did not understand God's wisdom?
- What is the type of future for which we can be certain when we put our trust in Jesus?
- What was the role of the Holy Spirit in leading the Apostles of Jesus?
- How does the Holy Spirit open our hearts and mind to receive the Good News?
- If the Holy Spirit is at work, how does this help us in our role of evangelism on our various frontlines?

WEEK 4: God's Fellow Workers

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly —mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy andquarrellingg among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?
1 Corinthians 3:1-4

BIG IDEA

Having reminded the Corinthians of who they are in Christ, Paul now confronts them by saying that they are 'worldly' - they're mere 'infants' - as their way of living out-of-step with the Holy Spirit. The evidence of that worldliness is plain to see: there is jealousy, quarrelling, and division because of the elevation of particular leaders over others. Paul argues that whilst leaders have a role to play (e.g., he laid the foundation, others watered), that ultimately they only build *on* and *for* Jesus. Further, because they are temples of the Holy Spirit, they ought to treat one another with care, integrity, and dignity. Together, they have been united in Christ, they therefore should seek to live lives in accordance with God's will and purposes.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What was the evidence of the Corinthians' worldliness?
- What are the main ways in which Christians today are in danger of being worldly?
- How are leaders in God's church important? How are leaders in God's church only ultimately building on and for Jesus?
- What does it look like to 'build with care' and treat one another appropriately in recognition that they are temples of the Holy Spirit?

WEEK 5: Fools for Christ

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. 1 Corinthians 4:5

BIG IDEA

Having chastised the Corinthians for the divisive behaviour of asserting one leader over another, Paul now reminds them that those who have been entrusted with much (including himself) must demonstrate a faithfulness with their lives. Paul implores the Corinthians to not chase after *special leaders* or *secret knowledge*, but to hold fast to the truth of the Gospel which has been conveyed to them. The Corinthians - and all who trust in the Lord - are already rich and ought to put those riches into practice. In a great act of self-accountability, Paul even urges the Corinthians to imitate him in being willing to lay down their lives for the sake of the Gospel. To help them in that pursuit, Paul promises to send Timothy, a co-worker in the Gospel.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Having caused division through the following of particular leaders, how should the Corinthians *actually regard* their leaders?
- What is our role in judgment? Whose judgment should we ultimately be mindful of?
- What does it mean to 'not go beyond what is written'?
- In what ways have all followers of Jesus become rich? How do we express this?
- Why was Paul sending Timothy? Who are the people in your life who encourage you in the truth and application of the Gospel?

WEEK 6: Temples of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

BIG IDEA

As Paul now addresses some disturbing reports that he has received, it's evident that the Corinthians have strayed in a range of ways including with sexual immorality (a case of incest is addressed here) and legal disputes amongst believers. Perhaps even worse, it appears that such behaviour has gone 'unchecked' and allowed to prosper. Paul identifies that it is not only that these behaviours are wrong - in and of themselves - but that they also reveal deeper issues relating to the substance of their unity, commitment to God's Word, and failure to recognise that they are temples of the Holy Spirit. Questioning their capacity to resist such temptation, Paul encourages them to flee from such people and - *in some extreme circumstances* - that those people should be even be excluded. Paul is not asserting that only the perfect can be part of their community, but that the Corinthians must turn from being oblivious to sin to recognising the precarious danger in which they are placed.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What were the cases of sin that Paul has reported to him amongst the Corinthians?
- How does Paul recommend that they address such sin *individually* but also as a *community* of believers?
- According to Paul, what is the danger of sin that goes 'unchecked'? What image does he use to describe this danger?
- In what ways are believers a temple of the Holy Spirit? What are the ways in which it is evident that the Corinthians are not taking this seriously?
- How are we in danger of failing to properly recognise that the Spirit dwells in us?

WEEK 7: Marriage and Singleness

1 Corinthians 7

Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 1 Corinthians 7:1-3

BIG IDEA

In this second part of the letter, Paul now addresses some of the questions that the Corinthians have written to him about. First question: about the nature of marriage! Whilst we've already heard about some of the sexual immorality occurring amidst the Corinthian church, it's important to recognise that all of this is also happening against a cultural backdrop in Corinth of sexual promiscuity and even prostitution as part of pagan religious practice. But Paul is clear: this is not how it is to be for the Corinthians. Paul reminds the Corinthians that the proper context for the expression of sexual intimacy is between a husband and wife. Hence, if unmarried (e.g., a widow or single person) Paul asserts - a radically counter-cultural teaching in our age as well - that sex is not a 'right', but a gift that finds its proper place in the context of marriage. This is of course not a new teaching, but reflects the very purposes as instituted by God (e.g., in Genesis).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What is at the essence of Paul's teaching regarding sex?
- How does this teaching contrast with our own culture's view of sex?
- Does Paul prohibit a widow from remarrying?
- Does Paul prohibit divorcing a spouse because they are not a believer?
- If Paul is addressing the church in these matters, should we be active in teaching these things within the church as well?

WEEK 8: Building Up

1 Corinthians 8:1-9:27

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. But whoever loves God is known by God. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3

BIG IDEA

Food sacrificed to idols was common practice in Corinth at the time of the letter. In fact, it's likely that in Corinth, it would have been sometimes difficult to avoid food that had been sacrificed to idols! So what should Christians do? Paul's logic is crystal clear: if you recognise that those idols are false (and not tempted to worship them), then it's fine to eat the food because you're not participating in idolatry. However, if you are tempted to worship that idol, or that there are others in your sphere of influence who may be tempted, then you should abstain from eating that food. With some questioning Paul's legitimacy as an apostle, he continues by asserting his authenticity as one sent by Jesus. Paul isn't grandstanding here, but as a messenger of the Lord, he is affirming the basis of his teaching in order that they would hold fast to Jesus.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Can you summarise Paul's teaching about the practice of eating food sacrificed to idols?
- Whilst we're unlikely to commonly encounter food sacrificed to idols in Australia, can you think of any contemporary examples of similar situations?
- How is it paramount that in all we do, that we both *seek to obey the Lord* and *are mindful that our behaviour does not lead other believers astray*?
- Why was it important for Paul to assert the authenticity of his apostleship?
- How does Paul express the freedom that has been afforded to him in Christ?

WEEK 9: Glorifying God

1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 1 Corinthians 10:1-5

BIG IDEA

Paul reminds the Corinthians of the sobering example of the past: that even as God's people had been rescued, that they strayed and rightly faced God's judgment. Paul tells the Corinthians that these things have been recorded for us in order to *keep us from setting our hearts on evil things* (v.6) and *as warnings to us* (v.11). As followers of Jesus, we have been given incredible freedom, but our freedom should be used to glorify God, be faithful according to the Lord's will, as an intentional example to those around us, and never causing any to stumble.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do you find most challenging about this part of the letter?
- What does Paul say is part of the purpose of having the examples of the people of God?
- How are we in danger of having our hearts set on evil things?
- What do you find most helpful in seeking to stand firm in the Lord?
- How does our behaviour also affect other believers for good or bad?

WEEK 10: All Things from God

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. Corinthians 11:27-29

BIG IDEA

As Paul continues to address some of the local issues in the Corinthian church, his attention now turns to liturgical matters concerning *head coverings in worship* and *appropriate behaviour at the Lord's Supper.* Whilst it's difficult to ascertain the precise context that Paul is addressing with regard to the roles of men and women, it's reasonable to assume that he was concerned (even though he freely proclaimed that all were equal and welcome before the Lord) about outsiders misconstruing the abandoning of particular social conventions. For example, some speculate that women letting down their hair was associated with the practice of prostitution. Paul wants the Corinthians to be mindful of their practice in worship, especially that they would conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring unnecessary division or offence.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What inappropriate behaviour was happening in gathered worship in Corinth?
- With a study Bible, what do you learn culturally about the nature of head coverings?
- How could their behaviour possibly lead people to get the wrong idea?
- How can we properly discern between matters that are culturally dependent and those things which are instructions with the same application today?
- Why is it important that when we gather for worship that it is reverent? What does this actually look like in practice?

WEEK 11: Do this in Remembrance of Me

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

BIG IDEA

It's tragic that whilst the gatherings of Corinthians should have been to the glory of God, Paul says that their meetings 'do more harm than good'! Not only was there division between the wealthy and the poor, but people were even getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. Paul not only calls this behaviour out as (obviously!) inappropriate, but he reminds them of the very purposes that the Lord Jesus instituted this meal. The meal was meant to remind them - until Jesus' returns - not only of Jesus' sacrificial and saving death, but that it was only through his death that a way was opened up to become part of God's family. Whilst the purpose of the Lord's Supper is clear, it was sadly evident - by their behaviour - that the Corinthians have neglected Jesus' teaching and it was time for them to bring their gathered worship life back into line with what the Lord would expect of them.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What were some of the inappropriate behaviours occurring at the Lord's Supper?
- How was this the antithesis of the purpose of the meal which Jesus had instituted?
- How serious - in Paul's explanation - is this sort of behaviour?
- How should we examine our hearts before sharing in the Lord's Supper together?

WEEK 12: To Each is Given

1 Corinthians 12

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.
1 Corinthians 12:4-6

BIG IDEA

Whilst spiritual gifts are given by God for the building up of his church, in Corinth, such gifts had become the source of pride and shame: some gifts were elevated over others, particular gifts were perceived as markers of 'true faith', whilst other gifts still were perceived as inferior and of less value. Paul - in one of his favourite analogies of the body - will of course have none of this, asserting that all gifts are of equal value, given by God, for God's purposes. Not only are all gifts equal, but the diversity of gifts that God has given are interrelated and necessary for the one purpose in mind: in common service of the Lord. There is diversity of gifts, but unity in the one Lord.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What was happening in Corinth when it came to spiritual gifts?
- How is it clear that all gifts are equal and necessary?
- For what purpose does God give gifts to his church?
- How do you see God's gifts at work in the life of your church?
- How can you encourage others as they actively use their gifts in the Lord's service?

WEEK 13: Faith, Hope, and Love

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

BIG IDEA

Continuing on from his teaching on gifts, Paul now addresses the core way in which gifts are to be expressed: in love! In fact, Paul asserts that regardless of how phenomenal a gift may be, it can be rendered useless if love is absent. To be clear, Paul unpacks the shape of love in words that are now commonly featured at wedding services. However, it's important to note that the original context for these words were not the type of love just between a husband and wife (although they obviously still apply), but in the context of Christian community. Paul encourages the Corinthians - and us - that the measure of that which will last is faith, hope, and love.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Why is love so important in relation to the use of gifts?
- Why can gifts be rendered ineffective if love is absent? Have you known this to be true?
- According to Paul, what are the core descriptors of love?
- What does Paul mean when he says that faith, hope, and love will not fail?
- What is your role in expressing love in the context of Christian community?

WEEK 14: Building Up the Church

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. 1 Corinthians 14:18-19

BIG IDEA

Being grounded in love, Paul urges the Corinthians to grow in their giftings to be expressed in service to the Lord. In focus in this chapter is a particular gift of 'speaking in tongues' that was the cause of controversy and continues to be today. This special language seems to be a gift of communication with God that is (generally) unrecognisable to anyone else. It's clear from Paul that such a gift is not greater than any other gift, nor is it a marker of a 'true believer', and has a specific context of use (in private or only if someone has a gift of interpretation). Further, whilst Paul is thankful for such a gift, he longs that people would not be obsessed by it, and instead would seek to publicly proclaim understandable words in order that people will hear and understand the Gospel. With regard to prophecy, it's important to note that Paul is not speaking of new 'revelation', but only that which affirms God's Word and helps bring it to light (e.g., insight, warning, encouragement, correction) for God's people.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the two gifts of speech that Paul describes in this chapter?
- How does it seem that the Corinthians had both misunderstood and ranked such a gift?
- What is the intended purpose and context of these gifts?
- Are we ever tempted to elevate one gift above another?

WEEK 15: Peace not Confusion

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. 1 Corinthians 14:26

BIG IDEA

Rounding off his corrective comments regarding their gathered worshipping life, Paul finishes this section by appealing to what is good order in worship. The measure of what makes for good order is clear: that everything is done *so that the church may be built up*. The order may vary from week-to-week or from congregation-to-congregation, but the purpose in mind remains the same! Whilst the Corinthians had a reputation for their gathered worship to be rather unruly at times (remember people getting drunk as well!), Paul's practical instructions (e.g., the maximum number of people speaking) seek to bring peace in their gathering. This of course does not mean that worship should be devoid of excitement and emotion, but we must always consider how it is helpful for the building of God's church together. Hence some of the cultural restrictions that Paul was careful not to upend (see Week 10), lest it become a stumbling block for those who are yet to believe.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Why is 'order' so important in gathered worship? What is the problem that Paul is addressing?
- What is the key purpose in mind with which everything in worship must be done?
- In your local church, how do you see this key purpose reflected in worship?
- What were some of the cultural considerations that Paul is mindful of in this section?

WEEK 16: The Basis of Faith

1 Corinthians 15:1-34

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

BIG IDEA

Some very dodgy theology had crept into the Corinthians way of thinking when it came to the 'resurrection of the dead'. It seems, according to Paul and the questions he had received, that some were teaching that there was no physical raising of the dead (when Jesus returns) but only some sort of 'spiritual' afterlife. Paul of course rebukes this strongly, asserting that our resurrection will reflect Jesus' resurrection: bodily and physical! In fact, Paul so strongly asserts this that he says that if that's not true, then even Jesus must not have been raised from the dead. Paul is demonstrating that such a proposition makes no sense, and is in direct conflict to what the very first Christians witnessed, believed, and proclaimed. Note that when Paul says in verse 3, "for what I received I passed on to you of first importance", he's reminding the Corinthians that this Good News of Jesus' resurrection is not just from him, but that these *very* words of proclamation come from the first eyewitnesses (some date the words which Paul is quoting to within months of the resurrection). No, for those who trust in the Lord our future is clear: that on the day that Jesus returns, the dead who have put their trust in Jesus will be raised too.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What was the false teaching that Paul was addressing in this section?
- In what way was Jesus' resurrection bodily and physical?
- How will our resurrection be like Jesus' resurrection when he returns?

WEEK 17: The Fruit of the Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

BIG IDEA

As Paul continues to address the nature of our resurrection as bodily when Jesus returns, he now draws a parallel between Adam and Jesus as a type of 'new' Adam. Simply: whilst death is the result of our sinful nature related to the first Adam; our redeemed and resurrected future is because of Jesus! It's because of sin that we die, but it's because of Jesus' death and resurrection that we can be made alive! Paul mocks death (verse 55) not because it is not a real enemy, but because of Jesus, death has been defeated and robbed of its power. Paul says that in the knowledge that even death has been overcome, that we should stand firm and let nothing move us from our trust in the Lord.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How is death the result of our sinful nature? How does this relate to the first Adam?
- How is Jesus' death and resurrection the means of life?
- Should we be concerned with the 'mechanics' of how we will be raised? What should give us confidence to believe even when it might not make full sense to us?
- In the knowledge that even death has defeated, how should we be spurred on to stand firm in the Lord Jesus?

WEEK 18: Stand Firm

1 Corinthians 16

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

BIG IDEA

After Paul encourages the Corinthians to give generously in support of the impoverished church in Jerusalem, details his intended missionary travel plans, and commends Timothy to them, he closes by urging them to: *be on guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong - do everything in love.* With all of the *internal* and *external* challenges that the Corinthians face, Paul wants them to be unwavering in their commitment to the Good News of Jesus. That no matter what they face, keeping watch that their feet would be firmly grounded in Jesus: *watching* for that which could lead them astray; *standing firm* in what they believed; *courageous* in declaring the truth in the face of false teachers and unbelief; *strong* only in the power of the Holy Spirit; and *doing everything in love* lest their witness be rendered of its power. We do this, notforeverr - but until the day that the Lord returns. How Paul longed for that day, but in the meantime every follower of Jesus has a job to do. Come, Lord!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What has most stood out for you in this letter?
- As Paul closes his letter, what are his final encouragements to the Corinthians?
- How do you see each of these aspects as still important today?
- What helps you to live in anticipation of Jesus' return?
- What helps you to stand firm as you await the day when Jesus returns?