

(Through the Bible) 1 Corinthians - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on 1 Corinthians emphasizes the importance of appreciation, unity, and the transformative power of the cross in the life of the church.

Duration: 56:49

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 1 Corinthians 10:31

Topics: "Church Discipline", "Spiritual Influence"

Description

This sermon delves into Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, addressing the functioning of the local church and the influence of the spirit of the city of Corinth on the church. It emphasizes the need for the church to influence society positively and believers to appreciate one another. The sermon also highlights the importance of discipline in dealing with sin within the church, the significance of selecting profitable actions over lawful ones, and the need to glorify God in both spirit and body.

Transcript

Let's turn to the word of God. We'll turn now to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Again, let's look at the first verse to see, first couple of verses to see what the subject of this letter is.

There's a little phrase here, which I'd like you to look at, which I think describes the subject and theme of this letter. Verse 2, to the church of God, which is at Corinth. The subject of this letter is the functioning of the local church, the church in a city or a town or a village.

And what we see in this letter is that the city of Corinth, the spirit in that city, had got into the church. See these two expressions here, the church of God and the city of Corinth. And the spirit in that city had got inside the church instead of the church influencing the city.

And that happens in many, many churches where the spirit in the world around influences the church instead of the church influencing society. And the believers in the church get influenced by the spirit of the world instead of them influencing their relatives and people around them. So that's what Paul is writing about in this letter.

But he has a lot of things to criticize in the Corinthians because there were so many terrible things going wrong in that church. But in spite of all that, he begins with a note of thanksgiving. And that's a very good example for us that even in believers in whom you may see 101 wrong things, there may be one or two

things you can find which you can appreciate.

And I always say, don't criticize a brother whom you have never appreciated. Did you hear that? Don't ever criticize a brother whom you have never appreciated. Many people try to help others by criticism and they cannot help them because the time before that brother did something wrong, when he was doing some good things, they never appreciated it.

I've used this example of a blackboard. If I have a blackboard here and I have a piece of chalk, I can write on that blackboard and you can see what I'm writing. But if I don't have a blackboard and I have only a piece of chalk and I write correct things, I'm writing on air, you can't see anything.

The blackboard is appreciation. When you have appreciated a person, then you take the white chalk of criticism and you write it, he can see clearly what you're writing. But if you have never in your life appreciated him, there is no blackboard.

And then you criticize. All your criticism may be correct, but you're writing on thin air. He can't see a thing and he's not helped.

Most believers are writing on thin air. That's why they accomplish nothing. Shall I show you a more excellent way? Love that person.

And when you see something good, appreciate it. Show him that you love him. And then even one word of criticism that you write on the board, he can see it clearly.

It'll go home to his heart and he'll do something about it. So Paul begins like that. I thank God, verse 4, for you.

Always, I thank God, because there are so many good things in you. First of all, for the grace of God, which you received, that you fellas are born again. And in everything, verse 5, you've been enriched in him.

Praise the Lord for that. And you fellas can share God's word so wonderfully, your speech, your knowledge. I appreciate your Bible knowledge, the way you speak about God, and the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you all.

I thank God for that. I thank God, verse 7, that you are all so zealous about spiritual gifts and not like so many other believers who don't care for spiritual gifts. You people in Corinth are eager to have spiritual gifts.

And you have all the gifts because you sought for them. You're not lacking, verse 7, in any gift. And you're eagerly awaiting the coming of Jesus Christ, who will confirm you, blameless.

God is faithful, verse 9, through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son. You can't believe that this is a church which has got so many wrong things, as you read in the remaining chapter. We can really learn a lesson from the Apostle Paul.

Many of the letters he writes, he begins with, do you know, fellas, I'm praying for you. And the first thing I do when I think of all of you is I really thank God that you chaps have come to Christ out of heathenism, you've accepted the Lord. I know you're not perfect, but there's so many good things in you I appreciate.

I want to teach all of you young people a lesson. Learn to appreciate. Have you heard that story of the teacher who kept a white sheet on the wall with a small dot, black dot in a corner? And told all the students to write down, write down carefully what you see.

And everybody wrote, I can see a black dot in the corner. Then the teacher collected all the papers and said, none of you wrote, I can see a white paper. All you wrote was, I can see a black dot.

He said, that's our nature. So much of white, less than 1% of black, and that's the only thing you see. And that's the only thing you write.

That's our human nature. We're like that. We're like that when we look at one another.

There's so many good things in those brothers, in those believers, you don't see that. We don't see it. We need to train our eyes to see as God sees.

Okay. We move on. One of the things he finds fault with them, he says, all of you are quarreling.

Once he's put up the blackboard, now we can write on it. He says, each of you are saying, I'm a Paul, I'm a Paulus, I'm a Cephas, I'm a Christ. See, they were divided into what we have called denominations.

Sitting in the same church is, my favorite preacher is Paul, and my favorite preacher is a Paulus. My favorite preacher is Peter. And then there was the people who felt they were holier than everybody else.

He says, we belong only to Christ. Now, do you think the people who said, I am of Christ, were actually more spiritual than others? No. I think they were probably the biggest troublemakers.

The people who said, who looked down on others, saying, you belong to Peter, you belong to Paul, you belong to Paulus. You know who we belong to? We belong to Jesus. So, that means we are holier than the whole lot of people.

So, they also belong to Jesus. You need to appreciate that. Even though that fellow may have a denominational name, he may be born again.

Value him as a brother in Christ. Don't think that you belong because you belong to an assembly which does not have a denominational name. Therefore, you alone belong to Christ.

Some of the people who belong to non-denominational assemblies can be the most arrogant, conceited, spiritually proud people you ever meet. And some of those people who are born again in those denominational churches may be very humble people. But they have a denominational label.

So, Paul says, has Christ been divided? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? Again, he's on this theme of accept everyone who is born again. Don't bring divisions on the basis of preachers. And Paul himself avoided baptizing people.

Verse 16. Because he didn't want anybody to say that I got baptized by Paul. I didn't get baptized by some ordinary believer.

In verse 18, he speaks about the subject, which I would say goes right through Corinthians. The word of the cross. The solution for a carnal church like Corinth.

What is the solution for a carnal church with all its problems? The word of the cross. That's the solution. The word of the cross is foolishness to those who perish.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. What is the word of the cross? Christ crucified. In the last chapter of 2 Corinthians also he speaks about it.

This is the answer. In both letters that Paul writes to the Corinthians, he speaks about the word of the cross. The gospel of the cross.

Of weakness. Of rejection by the world. Of misunderstanding.

Of not retaliating. Of humbling ourselves. Of not having anything to glory in from a human standpoint.

That's what he goes on to speak about. Verse 26. Consider this, my brothers.

There are not many wise people among you. Not many noble. Not many mighty.

And here is the word of the cross. Verse 27. God has chosen foolish people to shame the wise.

When Jesus chose his first apostles, he chose unlearned fishermen to put to shame the great Bible scholars of his day. Gamaliel was a professor. Annas, Caiaphas were all bishops.

And what was Peter? Peter was a fisherman. And God picked him up. What was James? What was John? Fishermen.

You know what fishermen are like? Go down to the coast of Kerala and you'll see what fishermen are like. If you want to know what type of people Jesus picked up. Unlearned.

Uncultured. Jesus picked them up. But hard working.

Sincere. With an open heart. Jesus picked them up to shame all these clever people in the religious society of his time.

He's doing the same thing today. He doesn't say that he doesn't choose any wise person. He says not many.

Most of the people God picks up. Are foolish. Weak.

Verse 27. Verse 28. The base things of the world.

The things, verse 28, that are considered as nothing. And brother, sister, if you feel that you fall into this category. That you're one of the nobodies.

That's why God picked you up. God has great delight in using nobodies. If you look at the history of India.

And the men who have. The men of God through the centuries. Who have influenced India for Christ.

And proclaimed his word. You'll find they were not great scholars. They were simple people.

Very simple people. Not highly educated. And who were sincere.

Just like in the first century. God picked them up. Anointed them with the Holy Spirit.

And gave them a ministry. That's something which we must remember. Why? Because if a man serves God.

With all his scholarly ability and knowledge. He will think that. Because I'm such an intelligent scholar.

God used me. And he will be proud of it. But God does things in such a way.

Verse 29. That no one will be able to boast in his presence. The ultimate purpose is that no human being.

Will ever be able to boast. You know the new song when we stand before the Lord is. Thou alone art worthy, O Lamb of God.

Thou art worthy, O God. Thou art worthy, O Lamb. Nobody else.

Not Paul. Paul is not worthy. Peter is not worthy.

Mr. X and Miss Y. None of them are worthy. Lord Jesus, you alone are worthy. No man will be able to boast.

In God's presence in that day. And because rich people. And clever people.

And intelligent people. Tend to think that God is using them. Because of their cleverness.

And intelligence. And their wealth or something like that. That my wealth is spreading the gospel.

Or because I'm such an intelligent person. God picked me up. And used me.

I'll never forget. More than 20 years ago. Or was it 25 years ago.

I was asked to speak. At the graduation ceremony. Of a bible seminary.

And during the time I was there. I spoke to a young student. Who came first.

In the outgoing class. He got the prize. For topping.

Number of subjects. Came first in his class. He wanted to talk to me.

And when I talked to him. He said. He says.

I'm thoroughly defeated by sin. All those years. Of accumulating.

Bible knowledge. Did not deliver him from dirty thoughts. The lust of the eyes.

I said. I told him how sad that is. And he said actually.

After 4 years here I'm worse off than I was before. In my life. I said what is all this bible knowledge doing for you then? You're going to be a pastor in a few years.

And what are you going to tell people? Are you going to tell them about Hebrew words. And Greek verbs and things like that. Those fellows don't need to know about all that.

They need to know how to overcome the lust of the eyes. And how to overcome dirty thoughts. You don't have that.

What are you going to teach them? That's the tragedy in Christendom today. Scholars. Who are teaching all types of things.

Which are not helping those people over there. It's like people. You know the man's got an injury here.

And they're putting the medicine somewhere else. He doesn't need a medicine there. He needs it over here brother.

He doesn't need all your Hebrew words. And Greek words and all that. He needs to know how to overcome sin.

And if you don't learn that. What are you going to help people? I never forget that. When I met this young chap.

And I felt very sad for him. Because he was a Hindu convert. He had come to the Lord.

And I think he just ended up his life. Wasting his life. Okay.

So I want to encourage you. To think more seriously about your life. That's more important.

And don't boast about your family background. Or cleverness. Anything that makes you boast.

Will hinder God from fulfilling his purpose in your life. And then Paul says. Let me give you my own example.

But do you know Paul was from a very wealthy family. Tarsus. He was Saul of Tarsus.

Tarsus was a town where only rich Jewish businessmen would go. I'm sure that Saul's father was a very wealthy businessman. And Saul came from a very wealthy family.

His father had sent him as a young man. To the Bible seminary in Jerusalem. Where Gamaliel was the professor.

The top seminary of that time. And his father could afford that. And those days it was a great honor.

For a man to be a scholar at a young age. And all the time. Paul was a man with a brilliant mind.

He was not only from a wealthy family. He was a man with a brilliant mind. I think if Paul had gone into any profession.

He would have succeeded. If he had gone into politics. He would have been a success.

If he had gone into business. He would have been a success. If he had been living today.

He would have been a top computer programmer. He would have been a success at anything. But he gave it all to Jesus.

But he did not use his cleverness. That is the point he is trying to say. He says when I came to you.

Chapter 2 verse 1. I did not come to you with all the superiority of speech. And wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of God. He says I did not come to show you what a scholar I am.

And how much of the Bible I know. And all this human cleverness. He says in verse 4. My message and my preaching.

Were not in persuasive words of human wisdom. They were not in persuasive words of human wisdom. But in demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power.

He says because. If I had preached to you with human cleverness. Your faith would have rested on my cleverness.

And not on the power of God. Those of you who preach the word. Let me encourage you and challenge you.

Make your preaching simple. For many many years. That I have preached.

I have always asked myself this question. Could the little children in my church. Understand what I said.

Or is it only the highly intellectual people. Who could understand. What about multitudes of people.

Who sit in my church. For whom English is a second language. They don't know all these high English words.

Did they understand what I said. That's enough. If the children.

And the people with fourth standard facts. Can understand me. All the rest will understand me.

But if only the certain. Clever people can understand me. Then 90% of the people haven't understood me.

Then what have I got at the end of my message. Some honor. As a great.

Scholar or speaker. I don't want that. I want to bless people.

When I was a young preacher. The Lord asked me a question. Do you want to impress people.

Or do you want to help them. I said Lord I want to help them. Then the Lord said.

Stop trying to impress them. I said okay. That was the turning point in my life.

And I want to encourage all of you. When you get up to speak. Do you want to impress people.

Or do you want to help them. If you want to impress them. Use your scholarly abilities and knowledge.

If you want to help them. Be simple. Speak in such a simple way.

That even the children. And the less educated people there. Can understand the gospel.

It's very simple. Jesus was a very simple man. When Jesus spoke children could understand.

When Jesus spoke everybody could understand. 100% could understand him. But today when a lot of people preach.

In Christian circles. Very few can understand. So Paul says even though I have such a brilliant mind.

I'm a greater scholar. Than all of you put together. I could have used my mind.

To speak in a very scholarly way. Better than all of you. But he says I didn't do that.

I laid it at the feet of Christ. All my ability and knowledge and all that. And I decided to speak in a very simple way.

With the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. So that the Holy Spirit. Could take my words home to your heart.

That's what I wanted. Not that you would be impressed with my cleverness. But that the Holy Spirit.

Would bring conviction in your heart. And change your life. That's the word of the cross.

That's how the cross works. In our life. But he says.

The other thing is. He says that you people. Were bathed so I couldn't give you anything more than milk.

Chapter 3 verse 1 and 2. You know. You have to also recognize when you are preaching to people. What is their spiritual level.

For example. If you are speaking to mature Christians. Who are godly men.

You speak in one way. And you speak to people who are just babes in Christ. You have to speak in another way.

And Paul recognized that. He said these Corinthians are still babes. They have been believers for many years but they haven't grown.

So I must speak to them at their level. He says I could not give you meat. Solid food.

Verse 2 of chapter 3. I give you milk. But with other people who are more mature. Chapter 2 verse 6. He says we speak wisdom.

Among them. We can speak about deeper things. When we go to them.

We can speak about dividing soul and spirit. With them. But with these people we have to speak about simple things.

Like how to overcome dirty thoughts. And how to overcome anger. And very elementary things.

We have to give them milk because that's all they can tolerate. Yet. He says when we do speak.

Even when we speak to these mature people. We don't try to speak in a worldly clever way. Chapter 2 verse 6. Not a wisdom of this age.

But we speak God's wisdom. Verse 7. So we must keep that in mind. Now this wisdom of God.

It says in verse 9. Cannot be seen by the human eye. Or heard by the human ear. Or understood by the human heart.

But verse 10. It has to be revealed by the Holy Spirit. See that's where it makes no difference.

Whether we are clever or not clever. Whether we are brilliant minds. Or not so clever minds.

It's revelation by the Holy Spirit. And that's why through the years. You find that God has used some very very simple people.

And given them an outstanding ministry. Brought many many people to the Lord. Through people who are.

Not scholars. And even if you look around India today. What do the great.

Bible scholars do? They don't go into the villages. And bring people to Christ. They go for these big conferences and evangelism.

And present papers. And become directors of big organizations. Who are the people who are doing the real work in India? The simple people.

Who go into the villages and bring people to Christ. Who are filled with the Holy Spirit. And go out there and bring people to Christ.

And establish them in the Lord. That's the work. That's the real work.

So I say let the useless people go to all these conferences. And let them sit on the committees. And be the directors.

You get down and build a church. Bring people to the Lord. That's what I want to do all my life.

I don't want to waste my time sitting on committees. And presenting papers. I want to bring people to the Lord.

And establish them in the church. That's our calling. That's what Paul did.

And so we move on. In chapter 3. He speaks about evangelism. And building the church.

He says in verse 4. See some of you say I'm of Paul and I'm of Apollos. He said what's the difference? We are both servants. I planted.

Chapter 3 verse 6. That means I did evangelism. I went there. Dug the ground.

Planted a seed. That's evangelism. Apollos came after me.

He didn't plant any seed. He didn't dig any ground. The seed which I had planted.

He watered it. Now some people get upset. If someone else comes along.

And waters. What he has planted. He says why don't you go and plant something yourself? Why you come into my field? I say is this your field? Or is it the Lord's field? I thought it was the Lord's field.

That's why I came to water it. With your field and keep it. See this is the tragedy of a lot of evangelism today.

This is my convert. And that's why there is so much of duplication of work today. Lot of people doing the same thing.

Instead of one doing what God has called him to. Another doing what God has called him to do. If Paul plants.

Isn't it good that Apollos comes and doesn't plant. But he waters. And he nurtures that plant.

And lets it grow up into a solid tree. That's the cooperation they had in the first century. What we have today is not cooperation.

But competition unfortunately. So don't get. Don't duplicate another person's work.

When you have evangelism. And making people disciples. And building the church.

The way I pictured it in my mind is. Supposing 100 people are carrying a log of wood. And 99 people are holding one end of it.

And one person is holding the other end of it. If you are a sensible person. Which end will you go and help? The end where there is only one person.

I see in many situations. 99 people doing evangelism. And one person making disciples.

And building the church. I say I want to go and help at that end. Not because I am against the people at the other end.

They are also carrying the log. But there are too many people there. We got to carry the other end of the log too.

The Mark 16 commission. And the Matthew 28 commission. So Paul and Apollos worked together.

They were not in competition. Because their converts were for the Lord. The church was for the Lord.

I planted. Apollos watered. But God was the one who caused the growth.

So he says all the glory should go to God. And what am I? And what is Apollos? Both of us, verse 7, are nobodies. We are nothing.

See that's why they could work together. That's the secret. Paul said I am a nobody.

Apollos said I am a nobody. And two nobodies can work together wonderfully. But when one fellow thinks I am a somebody and the other fellow says well if you are a somebody I am a bigger somebody than you it's very difficult for them to work together.

It's impossible. But if you are a nobody and somebody else is a nobody we can work together wonderfully. You know, if you ever build a church in any place let me give you a recommendation.

Build a church of nobodies. Make everybody a nobody. And you be a nobody yourself.

And you'll have a wonderful church without competition perfect cooperation. If you can succeed in building a church where every person including yourself is just a zero that will be a wonderful church. So many zeros.

You say they have no value but you put Jesus in front of it a one and suddenly this has got so much value It's not just zeros. It's one with so many zeros after that. That's how it is.

Don't be a somebody. The reason churches fail the reason of fighting among believers and leaders is because people want to be somebody. And so he goes on to talk about laying a foundation and building.

Both are necessary. He first uses the picture of planting and watering and then he speaks about laying a foundation verse 10 and building on that in verse 12 onwards. The foundation is Christ.

Leading people to salvation, faith in Christ. That's evangelism. Then he says you've got to build on it.

Now make sure how you build. What type of church are you building? Is it just a matter of size or quality? Always the big question you're going to face in Christendom is quantity versus quality. Remember this.

He says you're either going to build verse 12 with gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and straw. Supposing you are given a hundred thousand rupees to buy either wood, hay and straw or gold, silver and precious stones. What are you going to buy? If you want to build a huge structure you will buy wood, hay and straw with that money.

If you're concerned about building a structure that will last forever you'll buy gold, silver and precious stones with that money. So we have all got a limited amount of time. We don't have thousands and millions of years to live.

We may live 60, 70, 80 years maybe 50 years of usefulness for the Lord in that time. What are you going to do in those 50 years? Are you going to build something which is big without quality which is going to be burnt up in the final day? Or would you rather build something small which is solid quality of disciples which even when it goes through the fire it comes out. That's the test here.

And that's the question. He says some people build with wood, hay and straw. And with wood, hay and straw you can build a huge structure.

And some others build with gold, silver and precious stones. They don't build something so big but it's solid quality of believers, disciples it's a solid church. One day, the Lord is going to put everything in the fire.

And this man's huge structure will be burnt and there'll be nothing left of it. But he himself was a born again person, verse 15 so he's saved. And the other man who spent all his life despised by people he was despised because his work was not so big.

Oh, how many people in your church? Only so many, is it? I have so many in our church. How many churches have you built? Only so many, is it? You know how many churches we've built. Okay.

Let's wait till the judgment seat and see how many of these go through the fire. That's the test. And when the fire comes and tests this and this you may find that the small work of quality disciples a few churches go through the fire and come out pure.

And that huge structure with thousands of churches, burnt. What are you going to spend your life doing? Think of eternity. Think of what Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations.

Are you producing something that will last forever and ever and ever? That's a question that must always be in our mind. Is this the way God wants to build? Has this got Christian principles in it? Am I making disciples who love Jesus more than anything else? Or am I just gathering converts who just say, Lord Jesus, I believe in you. But they haven't become disciples.

So, just think of the end of your life, it says in verse 14, all your work is burnt up. How sad you feel. Everything that you lived for and did, burnt up.

You're saved, you go to heaven, but you live in heaven all eternity with regret that you wasted your one earthly life. I don't want to have that regret. I want to build with gold, silver, precious stones, quality work today.

Okay? Let's go to chapter 4. It speaks here about the servants of Christ. In verse 2 it says, the most important thing, it's required of stewards, that one be found faithful. It says in the Living Bible, the most important thing about a servant is that he does just what his master tells him to.

It's a very important principle in Christian work, that you don't do so many things, you do what your master has told you to do. You've got to wait upon God and say, Lord, what is your ministry for me, and I'm going to do that. The most important thing about a servant, if I have a servant in my house, I don't want him to run around doing so many things during the day.

I want him to do what I tell him to do. Otherwise, when I want him, he's busy doing something else. This is how a lot of full-time Christian workers are.

When the Lord wants them to do something, they've already made that program to do something else. They have no time to wait on God to find out what is God's will for them. So, learn to wait on the Lord.

The most important thing about a servant is to hear what his master is saying and to do that. And in chapter 4, it speaks about the condition of true apostles, true servants of Christ who walk the way of the cross, will never be honored. The apostles are the greatest in God's church.

They are the elders of elders in churches. They are the ones who plant churches, establish elders, and are a guide to the elders of churches. How are they considered by the world? In verse 9, God has exhibited us apostles last of all.

In the world's eyes, the apostles are last. They are not honored. We have become a spectacle to the world.

Now, Paul is comparing himself as an apostle and the other apostles with the Corinthian Christians who were carnal. He says, you people are filled, verse 8. You become rich. Verse 10, we are fools, but you are considered very wise.

We are considered weak. You are considered strong. You are all distinguished in the world.

We have no honor in this world. Do you know that a true servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ never has any honor in this world? He's not distinguished. It's the carnal Christians who are distinguished in the world.

If you seek to be distinguished in the world, you will end up as a carnal Christian. He says in verse 11, we are hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed. A true apostle of Christ never becomes rich through preaching the gospel.

Wherever you see a man who has become rich through preaching the gospel, you can be sure he is not an apostle of Christ. A man who has bought houses and lands for himself and his family through preaching the gospel, he's not an apostle. A man who can buy expensive cars through the money he gets by preaching the gospel, he's not an apostle.

No. He's just a carnal Corinthian Christian. Paul could have made a lot of money.

He didn't. A true servant of God does not make money through preaching the gospel. He receives gifts to survive, like Jesus and the apostles did, but does not to become a millionaire.

And you see exactly the opposite happening in Christendom in India today. That is why my respect for all these so-called preachers who talk about speaking in tongues and baptism in the Holy Spirit and all my respect for them is zero. Zero.

I have more respect for some of these Roman Catholic priests who go to North India and live very simply far more than some of these preachers who say they speak in tongues and make money and become wealthy through preaching the gospel and visiting the gulf and build houses and lands over here. Look at the apostle Paul. Which one are you going to follow? Are you going to follow a true apostle? Or are you going to follow all these counterfeits? To this present hour, verse 11, we are hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless.

Apostles? Roughly treated? Homeless? He says we toil, working with our own hands. He says we support ourselves. We are reviled.

People tell all types of false stories about us, but we bless them. We are persecuted wherever we go, verse 12, but we endure. People tell false stories about us, verse 13, we are slandered and when we are slandered we try to conciliate, to bring peace.

We have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things. You know in big cities you have a sewage pipe. The sewage pipe is where when you flush the toilet all that stuff goes into the sewage pipe.

Paul says we apostles are treated like that. Who cares for what flows in the sewage pipe? Do you know that the greatest apostle that lived said this is how apostles are treated. Whereas you Corinthian Christians, you are all scholarly, distinguished, respected.

You got your titles and your honor and people in the world appreciate you and you feel happy that people in the world honor you and give you honor in their different places. He says not us. I'm sorry to say that Christendom has lost that vision of what it means to be a true servant of God.

And it is our job if you feel that challenge to demonstrate in this country once again what it means to be a true servant of God. One who will not compromise. One who does not seek for any of the honor of men.

One who doesn't want all the honorary doctorates that the world gives because he doesn't want honor. God's not impressed with all these honorary doctorates and neither is the devil. The scum of all things.

Who wants to be like this? People want to be apostles and sit on thrones and get honor. My brother, sister, listen to what I say. Don't go that way.

Be a humble servant of God all the days of your life. Be an ordinary brother and an ordinary sister. Humbly seeking to serve God.

Rejected by the world perhaps. Rejected by Christendom perhaps. It doesn't matter.

The dregs of all things. You may say Paul had, psychologists will say Paul had this complex of being nobody, of being martyred and all that. Let the psychologists say what they like.

He was a true servant of God. Don't be disturbed by what a lot of Christians today are more influenced by psychologists than by the word of God. Don't worry about what they say.

Don't be disturbed by that. Follow the example of this godly man. And with all this rejection, was he jealous of the Corinthians? They are comfortable.

They are distinguished. He says, no, I feel sorry for you fellows. I'm in a more blessed position.

And he says, I want to speak to you as a father, not to shame you. He says in verse 14, I'm not writing these things to shame you, but to correct you. You can have 10,000 teachers, verse 15, but not many fathers.

I'm your father. You know, a true servant of God is a father. He doesn't shame people.

Teachers shame the students. If a student does something, a teacher will put him to shame. A father will never put a child who says something stupid to shame.

A true servant of God must be a father. And he says, you people can say so many wonderful things, but when I come into your midst, verse 19, I'm not going to listen to all these clever words. I want to see how much power there is in your life.

I'm impressed, Paul says, by power, verse 19. Not by words. Verse 20, because the kingdom of God is not in words.

It's in power. Power is the thing. How much power do you have? That's what I want to know, Paul says.

Okay. We go to chapter 5, where Paul has to deal with immorality in the church in Corinth. And it's a very good chapter, because sometimes we have to deal with sin that is not repented of, where people continue in sin.

Now, Jesus told us that when a person sins in a church, the first four chapters, by the way, are Paul is establishing a certain foundation of a true servant of God, and about the word of the cross. And then he deals from chapter 5 onwards with the various problems there were in the local church. How this spirit of the city of Corinth had got inside the church.

And part of it was immorality. There was a lot of immorality in the heathen temples in Corinth. And that spirit had got into the church.

There was a man who was living in adultery with his stepmother, father's second wife, and not even repenting about it. And the sad thing was the elders in the church in Corinth were so spineless people that they didn't do anything about it. They didn't have any moral courage and conviction to put that man out.

They wanted to be popular. You know, sometimes you lose your reputation when you put a man out of the church. They say, oh, that elder is a hard chap.

And they don't want that reputation of being hard. I've seen servants of God like that who always love their reputation more than the purity of the church. They are always concerned about being popular.

They are more like politicians in the church. They want to be popular. They want to get everybody's vote.

And they are not concerned about purity in the church. And when you have a politician like that as an elder or a pastor, you have a church which is in chaos. That's what happened in Corinth.

Why didn't the elders put that man out? Isn't it, doesn't everybody know that if a man is living in adultery with his stepmother, that's a sin? Why didn't somebody go and rebuke him and correct him? Because they sought honor. And you may find perhaps he was a rich man. I have a feeling he must have been a very rich man.

If he was a poor man, I'm sure those elders would have jumped on his head and rebuked him straight away. But he must have been a very rich, influential man. And then they thought, oh, he gives a large offering in the church and we better not disturb him.

These are the type of thoughts that can pass through your mind when you lead a church. And so, Paul said, I couldn't care less whether the fellow is rich or poor. The fellow is living in sin.

And even though I'm not there, he says, I'm here, far away from you, but I'm with you in spirit, verse 4, and I have decided, verse 5, to deliver this man to the devil for the destruction of his flesh so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And he says in verse 13, put this wicked man out of your church. That is called excommunication.

Put him out of the church. Sometimes we have to do that. But Jesus said, first go and speak to him alone, Matthew 18, then go in verse 18 to 20, then the elders must go and speak to him, 2, 3, and if he doesn't listen to you, finish with both those steps, he still doesn't listen, continues in sin, then Jesus said, tell his sin to the whole church.

And put him out. And treat him like a heathen. So there is a place for discipline in a church, just like there's a place for discipline in a home.

A home where children are not disciplined will be a chaotic home. And a church where people are not disciplined will be a chaotic church. A home where children are not disciplined, the children will take over the home.

And the father will have to sit in a corner. And a church where there's no discipline, the elders will have to sit in a corner, all the others will take over the church. That's exactly what's happened in many places.

Because the elder seeks popularity rather than establishing the church on divine principles of holiness. And what does it mean to hand over this person to Satan? That means, for the destruction of his flesh, means so that Satan will bring sickness into his body. All sickness is from the devil.

I don't have the slightest doubt about that in my mind. God doesn't give sickness to anyone. God may permit sickness, like he permitted it in Paul's life of thorn in the flesh, but he never gives it.

God doesn't tempt anyone, but he permits Satan to tempt. God doesn't make anybody sick, but he sometimes allows Satan to give sickness, but with a purpose. Sickness comes from the devil.

And he was praying that this man will get so sick through the devil attacking his body and he'll be put out of the church and there'll be no believers caring for him and there in the darkness, spiritual darkness, even though he's got so much money, he'll realize what he has lost and he will repent. So sometimes God uses the devil to bring sickness to an unrepentant believer to turn him back to repentance. That's very, very

common.

Sickness is used by God to lead people to repentance. So that's what Paul is praying. When I deliver him, he was an apostle and he had the authority to deliver a man to Satan and permit Satan to bring sickness into his life so that the man would repent.

So though the world treated him like the sewage, as far as God was concerned, he had authority and the devil was scared of Paul, even though the world treated him like sewage. In chapter 6, he deals with the question of believers taking each other to court. Why does a believer take another believer to court? Because he feels that God has not helped me to solve this problem and he feels that the church elders may not be able to help me, so let's go to a heathen court.

And Paul says here, it's totally wrong. And those who take each other to court like this, you are dishonoring the Lord. You should have taken that problem to the church.

He's not saying believers can't have problems. There will be problems among believers. But the believers should take them to the elders of the church and not to a heathen court.

And he says, if somebody cheats you as a brother in Christ, okay. Allow yourself to be cheated. Verse 7, last part.

Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? But on the other contrary, you yourself do wrong. You yourself go and take that right fellow to court. That's wrong.

And then he says in verse 9, don't you know that people who do such things will not inherit God's kingdom? Do you know that if you take other people to court, other believers to court, I mean, you can miss God's kingdom yourself. That's a sin that can put you out of God's kingdom. Why? Because you are bringing public disgrace to the name of Jesus Christ by taking that other believer to court and before non-Christians who are supposed whom you want to give the gospel to to bring them into God's kingdom, you are leading them away from God's kingdom by saying that Christians fight with each other.

When Christians are supposed to show, Jesus said, all men will know you're my disciples when you love one another. But you're driving them away, back into the hands of the devil by showing that you fight with one another. Then God says, in that case, if you do that, you don't deserve to get into God's kingdom yourself.

You better go and join all the other heathen too. Such people, verse 9, will not inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, a Christian must always be concerned about the glory of God.

Later on, he says that in chapter 10, verse 31. Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Are you going to glorify God by taking that brother to court? No? Then don't do it.

Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God. What are you accomplishing by taking that brother to court? Revenge. You hate him.

You want the judge to punish him. Leave it to God. Vengeance belongs to God.

Please remember that. Then he goes on to speak about our body. Verses 12 to 20 is a wonderful section on the human body.

There are some lovely passages here which it's good to think of. Verse 12 says, All things are lawful, but all things are not profitable. I just want to say a few words about this.

There are three levels at which people live. First of all, unlawful or unrighteous. That's where all unbelievers live.

Then you have a line there. Above that is lawful or righteous matters. That's where all believers should live.

Sometimes, unfortunately, believers go down to do unrighteous things also. But they should not. That's the second level.

Then you have the highest level, which is not only lawful, but profitable. See, out of a hundred things, 70 things may be unlawful. I don't do any of them.

30 things may be lawful. I can do any of those 30 things. But out of those 30 things, only 10 may be profitable.

So a whole-hearted Christian does only those 10 things. A half-hearted Christian does 30 things. A worldly Christian or an unbeliever does all 100 perhaps.

So this is the difference. You have a choice. You can live if you're really a sincere Christian.

You will never descend to the lower unrighteous things. You'll do what is lawful. But if you want to be a whole-hearted, effective servant of God, even from the lawful things, you have to select the things that are profitable.

For example, if we have 24 hours a day, I mean, if you're going to watch filthy movies and read dirty books, those are all unlawful. 70% of things you can't do. But there are 30% of things you can do in the world which are lawful and good.

And you decide to do those things. But still, among that, there are many ways you could spend the day. You could go sightseeing.

You could go for a picnic. You could do many, many things which are good. And if every day you spend like that, you're not going to be a useful servant of God.

You could also spend that part of that day anyway in fasting perhaps, in praying. You choose the things that are profitable in reading. There are many things we could read.

We could spend hours reading the newspaper and a few minutes reading the Bible. Or a few minutes reading the newspaper and hours reading the Bible. There's nothing wrong in reading the newspaper.

It's good to know what's happening in the world. But it's a question of proportion. You may not be sinning by spending two hours reading the newspaper.

But then you don't have enough time to read the Bible. Or there could be a lot of things like that. Money, for example.

Like time, money. There are unlawful ways to spend money. Doing wrong things with money.

We should never do that. But among all the right ways to spend money, there may be only a few ways where money can be spent profitably. A wholehearted Christian spends his time and his money profitably.

Selection, selection, selection. This is the secret of life. Out of all the lawful things I can do with my time, I select.

These are the things I'm going to do. Out of all the lawful ways in which I can spend my money, I select. These are the ways I'm going to spend my money.

That is the man who's going to count for God. Then he goes on to speak about the body in verse 13 to 20. He speaks about food for the stomach and the stomach for food, but God will destroy them both.

And he says in the last part of 12, I will not be mastered by anything. If you want to be a servant of God, you should not be mastered by the love of food. If you love food, and you're mastered by it, I can tell you in Jesus' name, you'll never be a useful servant of God.

You have to break free from that habit, and that's where fasting helps us. Then he speaks about the body, and I want to tell you some wonderful things about the body here in verses 15 to 20. It says your bodies, first of all, are members of Christ.

Your body is a member of Jesus Christ. So don't join it to a harlot. Don't let it be joined to immorality.

Your body must be, verse 13, the last part, for the Lord. And here's a wonderful promise. I really love this promise.

I've claimed it myself for many years. If my body is for the Lord, the Lord is for my body. Do you know that? If you say, Lord, my body, head to foot, my eyes, tongue, everything is for you, then the Lord is for my body.

Not only my spirit, he's for my body. He will keep my body fit to serve him as long as he wants me to serve him. The young people will faint, but those who wait on the Lord and give their bodies to him will rise like eagles in the sky.

And our body is also, verse 19, the temple of the Holy Spirit. You have been bought with a price, verse 20. Therefore glorify God in your body.

Wonderful passage on the body, which I want to encourage you to meditate on because we need a body to serve God. And we need a healthy body to serve God. Many people talk about healing.

I want to talk about health. Health is better than healing. Prevention is better than cure.

It's better not to eat too much and be a glutton and get sick and then ask the Lord for healing. It's better to not eat so much and be disciplined and not get sick. Isn't health better than healing? Let the Lord not be your healer, but let him be your health.

How many times have you heard people preaching that the Lord should be your health? We hear about the Lord being our healer. Prevention is better than cure. Give your body totally to the Lord and say, Lord, you're my health.

You're the health of my body. And as long as you want me to serve you, I'm here available. I want to glorify God not only in my spirit and soul, I want to glorify God in my body because I've been purchased.

Purchased by God to be His. It belongs to Him. I have to vacate the house because He has purchased it like we vacate a house once somebody has signed a sale deed and purchased it.

We must vacate our body, all of us, and say, Lord, you're the owner. Please take it. It's a sin to live in a house which somebody else has purchased.

Hand your body over to the Lord. Let's pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/wGal4skAGP4.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/through-the-bible-1-corinthians-part-1/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net