

Christ Community Covenant Church

“The Spirit Filled Life in a Broken and Fallen World” - A sermon series on 1 Corinthians

“So Corinth, I’ve been thinking about your letter . . . “

Pastor Dave Scherrer - August 7, 2016

It is my firm belief that the Word of God and His abiding Spirit transforms believers. **Yielding to and obeying** the eternal principles of life lived in Christ revealed to us here in God’s Holy Word are the single most important pursuits for the Christ Follower.

Before we begin our new series I want to teach you a little bit about preaching. I love to preach the Bible. Recently, we have been preaching ‘**topically.**’ We have just finished a series on ‘neighboring.’ And I think that the series was filled with highly valuable teaching grounded in Scripture. It was practical and relevant. I am happy that you all were presented this material. Prior to that we completed an extended series on the book of Genesis. When a pastor preaches through a book or chapter, it is called ‘**expositional**’ preaching. The expository preacher shares with his or her audience the meaning of the text intended by its author and understood by its original recipients.

Expository preaching involves the comprehensive explanation of a passage. Expository preaching presents the meaning and intent of a Biblical text, providing commentary and examples to make the passage clear and understandable. The word *exposition* is related to the word *expose* — the expository preacher’s goal is simply to expose the meaning of the Bible, verse by verse.

To prepare an expository sermon, the preacher starts with a passage of Scripture and then studies the context and the historical setting of that passage in order to understand the author’s intent. They will study the vocabulary and grammar to see if there is a hidden truth that was lost in translation. The Goal is to discover what God’s revelation is for that passage. **An expositional sermon is limited by the text it is covering.** Every word from the pulpit should amplify, elaborate on, or illustrate the text at hand, with a view towards clarity. G. Campbell Morgan, pastor of London’s Westminster Chapel and known as ‘the prince of expositors’, wrote, “The sermon is the text repeated more fully.”

It is kind of the opposite of topical preaching. In topical preaching I seek verses to provide authority on a given subject. If I want to preach on the subject of laziness, I might quote Romans 12:11 – “*Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.*” The danger of course is that I may take a passage out of context and ‘prove’ something that that verse does not intend to prove. It is an all too common mistake of topical preachers. Expository preachers on the other hand find that the topic or content is set by the passage. I preach the content in its context when I preach expositionally. It isn’t always easy. The passage may require extensive study and it may not be fun and comforting. But, ***if I believe that the word of God is alive and active and that it is sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, and that it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart,*** then you can deal with the content with God and your heart.

It is a high calling and daunting responsibility to open scripture and present God’s truth. You may be saying, “Who are you Dave to tell me what God is saying in any one passage?” It is good of you to ask this. Not just of me but any preacher, classroom teacher, small group leader and Christian workshop facilitator.

To comfort you I will tell you that I take this calling very seriously. I read the Scriptures that I am studying usually 6 to ten times or more before I present it. I study the works of ancient and contemporary theologians and of seasoned scholars from various traditions to get their understanding of the passage. Most importantly, I seek the only opinion on the passage that really matters - that is of our Heavenly Father Himself. So I pray that God will reveal His truths for the passage to me and I study the content and compare it to similar Biblical passages, as Scripture will never disagree with itself. I research the historic context of the writing to see what the intent was of the writer to his specific audience. Finally, I may make some suggestions on how you might apply these truths to a 21st century life in Christ. To be honest though, I’m not big on giving you formulas. I would rather you go to your heavenly Father when a sermon is finished and that you ask Him directly what it is that you should do to apply the truths you have learned

on Sunday morning specific to your particular circumstances. I don't know your stuff. God does. He wants to help you with your stuff, but you have to explore His word, invite the Spirit to council and console you and direct you.

Why am I going into all this? In general I think it is good for you to know, but specifically this morning we start a study on the letter of 1st Corinthians and I will preach on it expositionally. And this book will take careful study. It is filled with very practical teachings on the Christian life and it is kinda in your face, dealing with critical – not very politically correct - issues that face our culture. We will take all of this next school year to unpack it, broken up of course by some topical studies just so you don't Corinthian brain freeze!

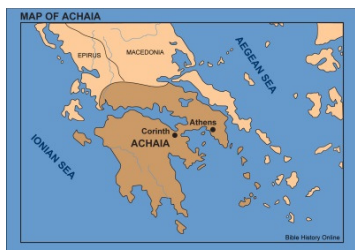
I have entitled the series:

“The Spirit Filled Life in a Broken and Fallen World”

Because I believe that a major theme of 1st Corinthians is that God is telling us that our world is broken, corrupt and that if we listen to its lies, we will be led down a road of destruction. But if instead we seek the crucified Christ and listen to and obey His abiding Holy Spirit we will thrive in this world and even participate in laying claim to this world for the Kingdom of God.

“So Corinth . . . I've been thinking about your letter.”

This letter was written by Paul on the occasion (that makes it an 'occasional letter') of his having received correspondence asking questions about what is an appropriate Christian lifestyle. Paul had been in Ephesus for more than two years on his third missionary journey when he received a disturbing report of quarreling within the Corinthian church, a report he received from people associated with one of its members, Chloe. You can read of Paul's founding of this church in Acts 18 only 4 years earlier and this church had already developed deep divisions. Paul penned his letter in AD 55, just as he was planning to leave Ephesus for Macedonia. This letter also refers to a lost letter that was sent to the Corinthian church before this one was sent. So we have lots of work to do to wrap our hearts and minds around these passages. Strap in. This is really going to be fun and intensely challenging and practical! Let's get a little visual help first for those who learn by seeing . . .



Corinth had two harbors: Lechaem on the Corinthian Gulf and Cenchreae on the Saronic Gulf. Lechaem was the principal east port and was the main trading station for Italy and Sicily, where there were many Corinthian colonies, while Cenchreae served the commerce with the Eastern Mediterranean.



Acrocorinth



Pirene is the name of a fountain or spring in Greek mythology, physically located in Corinth. It was said to be a favored watering-hole of Pegasus, sacred to the Muses. Poets would travel there to drink and receive inspiration.

Corinth was a large, international metropolis, a churning port-town filled with business minded people from different backgrounds, values and religions. I see it as a combination of New York City, San Francisco and Las Vegas. Idol worship to gods such as Aphrodite was particularly prominent in the city, her temple found on the prominent geological rise called the 'Acrocorinth.' There is archeological evidence of perhaps another 200 temples and religious sites. In this sense, Corinth was very much like a modern urban area, containing unending opportunities to engage in sinful behavior without any apparent consequences. There was a phrase in the day – "To live like a Corinthian" - that had become a part of the Greek language, and meant to live with drunken and immoral debauchery

Such a community clearly had a negative influence on the Corinthian church. But we will notice that Paul's instruction to the believers was not to retreat from their city. This was not Paul's vision for the church then or now. Instead, **he directed us to live out our commitment to Christ ever more faithfully in the midst of a broken and fallen world.** Paul expected that we Christians would shine our light into the dark places of their world by worshiping in a unified community that was accountable to one another.

We will spend more time on the historical context of this letter as we explore this book but we will find 4 regular themes -

Necessity for **Unity** in the church
A plea for **Humility** in the church
The confrontation to pursue **Sanctity and Purity**
The pursuit of **Doctrinal Integrity**

On Unity

1 Cor. 1:10-13

I appeal to you, brothers by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

On Humility

1 Cor. 1:20-21

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach^a to save those who believe.

On purity and sanctity

1 Cor. 5:1

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans.

Doctrinal integrity

1 Corinthians 15:3

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

That brings us this morning to the Lord's Table. It is in 1st Corinthians that we find some of the most passionate teachings about the resurrection of Christ. In 1st Corinthians Paul speaks over and over of the cross and its sufficiency:

1 Cor. 2:2

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

This table, this sacred expression of love was instituted just hours before Christ was murdered on that cross and His death and resurrection gives us hope that the price he paid is enough for all my sin. This is the table of Hope. It is the table that tells us that the sacrifice of the body of Christ and the shedding of the blood of Christ was sufficient to save us. His resurrection proves it. And with this table we celebrate this!