

**Sermon, February 19, 2012**  
**“What Is the Church?” 1 Corinthians 9:24-27**  
**Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy**

**The 27 Books of the New Testament**

- Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- Early Church: Book of Acts
- 13 Letters of Paul: Romans, **1 Corinthians**, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- 8 General Letters: Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Prophecy: Revelations

**Overview of 1 Corinthians:**<sup>1</sup>

- The letter was addressed to the church in the city of Corinth, written sometime in 55AD by Apostle Paul.
- Corinth was located in southern Greece about 45 miles west of Athens.
- The Isthmian game, one of the two most famous athletic events of that day was hosted by Corinth.
- Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name represented immorality and debauchery.
- The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love.
- The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1ff.).
- Unable to fully break with the culture from which it came, the church at Corinth was exceptionally factional, showing its carnality and immaturity.

**General Outline of 1 Corinthians:**<sup>2</sup>

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1–9)
- II. Divisions in the Church (1:10–4:21)
- III. Moral and Ethical Disorders (5:1–6:20)
- IV. Instruction on Marriage (7:1–40)
- V. Instruction on Questionable Practices (8:1–11:1)
- VI. Instruction on Public Worship (11:2–14:40)
- VII. Instruction on Resurrection (15:1–58)
- VIII. Conclusion: Practical and Personal Matters (16:1–24)

**Major Themes of 1 Corinthians:**<sup>3</sup>

- The major thrust of this epistle is corrective of behavior rather than of doctrine.
- In one way or another, wrong living always stems from wrong belief.
- Sexual sins for example, (7:1–40); Proper worship (3:17; 12:12–27; (11:17–34); Spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40); doctrine of the resurrection, (15:13, 14); God’s judgment of believers, (see 3:13–15); idols and of false gods, (8:1–11:1); expression of genuine, godly love (13:1–13).
- So Paul deals with the cross, divine wisdom and human wisdom, the work of the Spirit in illumination, carnality, eternal rewards, the transformation of salvation, sanctification, the nature of Christ, union with Him, the divine role for women, marriage and divorce, Spirit baptism, indwelling and gifting, the unity of the church in one body, the theology of love, and the doctrine of resurrection. All these establish foundational truth for godly behavior.

**The letter to the Corinthians is more than a laundry list of appropriate and inappropriate behavior of Christians; it is a call for the church to be true disciples of Christ and continue the mission of Christ. 1 Corinthians gives the answer to the question, “What is the church?”**

**1. Remember last week, “What does Romans tell us?”**

**2. We learn in Romans that you are in a special relationship with the living God...**

<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 1:1

<sup>2</sup>New American Standard Bible, Compact Reference Edition, 2000.

<sup>3</sup>MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 1:1

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- **You are saved**...born again, born from above, a new creation! (6:1-23)
- **You are justified**...put back in a right relationship with God, imputed (5:1-2)
- **You are sealed**...given the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (5:5)
- **You are empowered**...You are gifted for ministry for the good of Christ’s Church (12:1-8)
- **You are adopted**...made a child of God (8:15-17)
- **You are part of a family**...the body of Christ (8:16; 12:4-5)
- **1 Corinthians tells you, church, that you have a purpose**...you must go out and DO the will of the Father, and continue the mission of Christ, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**3. The overall purpose of the church is to represent Christ, spreading the Gospel and making disciples.**

- **1 Corinthians 9:24**
- In this section of 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing about the primary purpose of the church as he describes his own experience in preaching the gospel...the prize is for God’s glory; winning others to Christ.
- If you, the church, are involved in being a Christ representative you are to be bold in your faith
- In this sense, you are ambassadors (representatives) of Christ, disciples making disciples, witnesses, a royal and holy priesthood and church;**2 Corinthians 5:20; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1Peter 2:5; 1Peter 2:9**
- You have been called out, holy, separated from the world, indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit to exercise your God given gifts in the will of God for the glory of God.

**4. The church, as representatives of represent God must get to know Him by being a disciple of Christ.**

- **1 Corinthians 9:25**
- Paul is saying that he takes his Christian purpose in spreading the gospel seriously.
- So He goes into strict (disciplined) training in order to exercise his Spiritual gifts for the glory of God.
- **Philippians 3:13-14**
- In other words, remember who you are, forget who you were...strain toward what is ahead and press on
- As you train to exercise your spiritual gifts you become more and more Christ-like, a true disciple...
- Your life takes on a sense of purpose, a mission to go where God sends you as a disciple of Christ...

**5. As God’s representative your discipleship comes with purpose from the Word of God**

- **1 Corinthians 9:25**
- Paul is not going about without purpose (running aimlessly...beating the air).
- He disciplines himself to continue the mission of Christ, preaching the gospel and making disciples.
- He plays by the rules so as not to be disqualified from his spiritual gift of preaching the Word of God.
- **2 Timothy 2:5**
- The Word of God is the rule of faith and life, it is THE “rule book” for the church. But it is not a rulebook of oppression, but a rulebook of freedom...by it you can discern the will of our Lord and you will be better able and better equipped to freely exercise the gifts God gave us.

**Conclusion:**

- The church is the beautiful bride of Christ, the body of Christ, to be treasured, nourished, taught and encouraged to continue the mission of our Lord.
- The church is made up of disciples of Christ, those who are willing to hear and be taught the Word of God.
- The church has a distinct purpose; to spread the gospel and make disciples; disciples, as part of the body of Christ, going out into the world to tell others about Jesus, be an example of Christ, and make disciples...a Holy circle of faith.
- Remember who you are...children of God, part of His glorious Church, His body.
- Do you know who you are and are you ready to get into the game...be a true disciple of Christ, learning and living God’s will for your life through the power of the Holy Spirit?
- If you commit to the God-centered desire placed on your heart there will not be a disconnect between God’s will and yours...