THE CHURCH OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Theme: *The church belongs to God, exists by the grace of God, and is sustained by the faithfulness of God.*

I. YOU ARE THE CHURCH — vv. 1–3

A. God identifies us before He addresses us.

- *"The church of God"*
- *"Sanctified in Christ Jesus"*
- *"Called as saints"*

Corinth was cliquish, prideful, immoral, undisciplined, and immature—yet God still called them **His church**.

B. God does not define you by your worst season.

- They weren't **behaving** like the church—but they were the church.
- They weren't **acting** sanctified—but they were sanctified in Christ.
- They weren't **acting** like saints—but they were called saints.

Key thought: *God does not lower the standard; He reminds the saints of who they are supposed to be.*

C. You cannot separate Christ from His body.

- Christianity is not Christ without His body.
- We cannot love the Head while despising His church.
- If you are in Christ, **you are part of the church you're talking about.**

1 Corinthians 12:15–16

II. YOU ARE CALLED TO SERVE IN THE CHURCH — v. 2

*"To the church of God **at Corinth**..."*

A. Do you come to church—or have you been called to the church?

There is a difference between **attendance and belonging**.

B. Ruth gives us a picture — Ruth 2.

The kinsman-redeemer told Ruth:

"Don't go and gather grain in another field...stay here."

In that field Ruth found:

- A place to **serve**
- **Fellowship**
- **Protection**
- Her thirst **quenched**
- A **harvest**
- **Favor**

But Ruth didn't just sit in the field—**she worked the field.**

Key thought: *Some of us are trying to reap from a field we've never worked in*.

C. We are called to serve, not sit and soak.

- Soak up the songs
- Soak up the sermons
- Soak up space

We need a **calling mentality**, not merely a **coming mentality**; a **vested mentality**, not merely a **viewing mentality**.

III. YOU ARE THE CHURCH—BUT NOT "THE CHURCH" — vv. 2–3

"...with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

A. The church belongs to God.

*"The church of **GOD** at Corinth."*

B. God's work is bigger than our congregation.

Corinth wasn't the only church:

- Sanctified in Christ
- Called to be saints
- Calling upon Jesus as Lord

C. Beware of ecclesial exceptionalism.

"They don't preach this anywhere else."

"You won't find this in other churches."

No congregation is the exclusive expression of Christ's body.

Key thought: *You are the church—but don't get it twisted: you are not THE CHURCH!*

IV. THE CHURCH EXISTS BY THE GRACE OF GOD — vv. 4–7

"I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus."

A. Can you thank God for His grace toward somebody else?

Even when they are making your life difficult?

Paul could thank God for grace operating in people who were creating problems for him.

B. Keep your focus on Jesus.

Christ dominates verses 4–9.

- Peter endured the waves while focused on Jesus.
- Stephen faced death focused on Jesus.
- Paul and Silas worshiped through wounds and chains.

C. Grace gives gifts.

Corinth did not lack any spiritual gift.

But:

They were gifted, but immature.

Giftedness is not the same as maturity.

And if God has given His church the gifts it needs:

If we're lacking, it's because somebody's not using!

V. THE CHURCH IS SUSTAINED BY THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD — vv. 7–9

"He will also strengthen you to the end..."

Why will we make it?

Not because of:

- Our speech
- Our knowledge
- Our giftedness
- Our strength

But because:

"GOD IS FAITHFUL!"

Our perseverance ultimately rests on **His faithfulness, not ours.**

CONCLUSION

A perfect God has refused to give up on an imperfect church.

Christ **died** for the church.
Christ **rose** for the church.
Christ sent His **Spirit** to indwell the church.
Christ is **perfecting** the church.
And Christ is **coming back** for the church.

So don't give up on God.

And part of not giving up on God is **not giving up on His church.**

THE CHURCH EXISTS BECAUSE OF THE GRACE OF GOD!