

The Apostle Paul and the Saints of Corinth

I Corinthians 1:1-9

When you read First Corinthians, you're reading a letter. It's a real letter. It was written from a man named Paul to a church he founded. They knew each other. They asked him a series of questions. Reports came and he answered their questions. It's a real letter, but it's an unusual letter. First of all, it's a letter that's 2000 years old. I don't know if you've ever read a letter from 20 years ago, or 40 years ago, or 100 years ago, maybe from, you know, your relatives or from your childhood. But it takes a little deciphering, and it certainly takes a lot of deciphering to read a 2000 year old letter written in a different language, a different culture, very different times.

It's a missional chapter of the Bible, by which I don't mean chapter one. I mean, it's a missional book of the Bible. So it's good for us as a church. We're very missions minded Church. Paul founded the city in Corinth, started the church in Corinth on a mission trip, a very difficult mission trip. It's also one that speaks to the issues of our day. The United States of America is probably more like Corinth than it was like Rome or Ephesus or the other cities in ways we'll see in coming weeks. So he's writing a letter to real people who are who are without their founding pastor. He was there 18 months, which may not sound long, but it's the second longest. Paul stayed anywhere because he was always traveling, always moving. He wrote the letter maybe 2 or 3 years after he left the city. So listen to God's Word. I Corinthians 1:1-9: We'll go more slowly through the first verses and a little bit more rapidly through the later ones. Paul writes,

Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother sustained his to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you. Because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as a testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any gift. As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, I pray that you would give me the ability to be fair, to do well by your word, to expound what's there, and give us all the ability to hear it, apply it as your spirit enables to our lives.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Paul begins letters as people begin letters. When we write a letter, we say, Dear blank. It's usually very simple. We often add a couple words like dear, dear, blank, dear John, I hope you're doing well now. Paul follows the conventions of his day a little bit, and he does so in part by saying who he is. That's the way they did it in those days, he says. Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle. The first thing he wants to know is he's an apostle. He's called an apostle by the will of God, to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother. We know absolutely nothing about him except that he was Paul's co labor in some way. But we do a lot, a lot about Paul. By God's will. He was called as an apostle. Now Paul doesn't stand on the

title apostle very much. He doesn't insist on being called Apostle Paul. And I think that's probably a good idea for us to resist the temptation to demand titles or honors for ourselves.

But in this letter, he does emphasize that he's an apostle because he's been challenged, because people have doubts as to whether Paul has really got what it takes to be an apostle, because he did not meet the standards of Corinthian society for excellent rhetoric and a big standing ancient account say he was a small man, and not especially impressive to look at.

He himself says he didn't have great rhetorical skill, and some people thought, well, he can't really be an apostle then because he doesn't look like one. But of course, Paul is an apostle. If you know your Bible well, you know that God called Paul, who had been a persecutor of the church in Acts chapter nine. And Jesus gave him a vision of himself.

And after he came to faith, he says these words, the Lord called Paul because he is a chosen instead of mine. He tells us to the person who laid hands on Paul at a crucial moment, he is a chosen instead of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles, and I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.

That's his call. And that call, of course, became true on both counts. He was an apostle, and he suffered. He went out and planted churches widely. That story is told in Acts chapter 13. He was sent out with his dear friend Barnabas, and as he traveled, he intended to go to areas we would call today Turkey or Asia minor.

And he's going this way. That was his plan and he had a vision in the middle of the night. And that vision showed him a man from Macedonia saying, come over and help us. Now Macedonia is in the northern half of Greece. Greece has two great bodies and a lot of lot of islands, but two great bodies. The top is Macedonia. And then sometimes people say Greece proper. And when he went across the sea, the Aegean Sea, he began to minister and things went well and poorly. Simultaneously he went to Philippi, he went to Thessalonica, he went to Berea. And everywhere he went he lasted more or less a month, and he started a church, and he made converts. And the spirit came upon people, and he ran into fierce opposition.

People jailed him, people stoned him. They left him for dead. It was the kind of thing that makes you wonder if maybe you misunderstood the vision. Why? Are you sure? I mean, this is going really badly here. I've been stoned and left for dead, and then he went to Athens. Nobody stoned him. They mocked him. They said, who is this rag picker? This babbling? And they scorned him. And then finally he came to the city of Corinth. Corinth, he said he arrived in much fear and trembling, in weakness and fear and trembling. We would say today he thought he made a huge mistake. He couldn't. He didn't know what he was doing anymore. And he arrived in the city. And God assured him that in this city, the city of Corinth, he would have a fruitful ministry, said, I have many people in this city now.

It's a little bit surprising when you learn a little bit more about Corinth. But before we do, when I say a little bit more about Paul's time in Corinth, he said he came in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. That's part one. Part two is he resolved to know Jesus Christ in him crucified? You notice how many times he says the name Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus in those first few verses over and over?

But he's not just preaching Jesus Christ as prophet or teacher. He's saying Christ in Him crucified, which was offensive to Greeks who would want to follow a man who was crucified? To be crucified is to experience the most shameful, ignominious death. And it shows you had no social status, nobody to

defend you, because a person of any standing would have somebody intervene, save you from that terrible death.

You might still be put to death, but not by crucifixion. And as I said a moment ago, he also came without the eloquence that the city of Corinth loved. Now there was a partizan spirit. We'll talk about it off and on, because it's a very big theme in the book. There was a partizan spirit there, and people quickly developed the idea that they had favorites and some love Paul, because he started the church, but others loved Cephas, Peter and others loved Apollos.

Now Apollos is described in the Bible as a man who was first of all, a friend of Paul's and a trusted partner. They were friends. They weren't rivals to each other, but Apollos, according to acts chapter 18, was passionate and educated and a superb debater. And a number of Corinthians said, we like him better than Paul, who came in weakness and fear and trembling without a whole lot of rhetoric.

And so Paul is called by God, he says, to be an apostle. He doesn't insist on being called an apostle unless he needs to insist. And he's writing a letter, needs him to know that he writes with apostolic authorities call by the will of God. Verse one says to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, call a faith. Verse nine called into fellowship with Christ.

Now the word apostle is actually a common word. In those days, the ordinary meaning of the word apostle was just someone who's carried a message from one person to another. You know, they didn't have cell phones and email, and so people carry messages. Somebody who carried a message was an apostle. The word means someone who sent the message apostle, which means I send apostolos means a sent person. But Paul's a special kind of apostle. You remember there were 12 apostles. Jesus called. They were called to be eye and ear witnesses to testify to what Jesus said and did, and to state what the meaning of the events was, not just what Jesus said and did, but what it meant. There were 12, as you know, Judas betrayed, and the Lord in his goodness gave them not one more apostle, but two -- there was Matthias, chosen by lot in acts chapter one, and then they also receive Paul as an eye witness. This is a tiny side point. I guess. We don't want to stand on titles unless we need them. If somebody says, you know, I am a blank, I'm a doctor and somebody says, well, you know, look like a doctor to me, then you have to defend the fact that you're a doctor. You don't walk around saying, I'm an honest man, but if somebody says you're a liar, then we say, no, no, I'm an honest man.

So Paul's saying, is it apostle? Because people doubted that he was an apostle. He's saying, God has given me a role in this world. And of course, it's a great comfort to know that Paul's not the only one. Although he was uniquely an apostle. God gives his people roles in the world. Does. This book is going to show in different ways mother, father, parent, child, husband, wife, worker, whatever your skills may be, the book of First Corinthians has that we.

You see Paul saying, I am confident in who I am, which is a blessed state to have. Now Paul says he's writing to the church of Corinth. And of course, we need to say a word about the city of Corinth. If you're steeped in the Bible, you probably know most of what I'm going to say in the next few minutes, but I still need to make sure we know that first of all, it says to the Church of God that is in Corinth, that means it's God's Church, God's church.

We should say that about every church. We should say that about this church. This is the church of Birmingham, Alabama, but it's God's church. It's God's church. People sometimes say, this is my church.

And that's a good thing. When people say, it's my church, church. I belong to the church I love, warts and all, the church I love and its glories and its projects, its ambitions, its goals. To serve God. It can't be negative can mean my church, meaning the church that should do what I want it to do. So it's not bad to say my church, as long as you say it the right way and we see it underneath the idea that this is the Church of God. God owns every true church. He also says that this is the Church of God that is in Corinth. To those sanctified in Christ Jesus. Now, if you know the book of first Corinthians, you know that this is, not the most godly church it's ever been around. Do you know that they quarrel with each other? They had heroes. They put other people down and some spectacular sexual sins. They would call each other and drag each other to court. This is a pretty messy church. And so when Paul says to the church of Corinth, to those shamed, defiled in Christ Jesus called to be saints, he's saying two things about that church is saying two things about us. He's saying that church, that sinful church that fallen, flawed church, sanctified by God, meaning set apart, we would say redeemed and justified and sanctified people sometimes call it the definitive sanctification. When God sets a person apart for himself forever, right now, the day of your salvation is day when you are set apart for and holy to God. That's the basic idea of sanctification, set apart. So this is a church is set apart and right with God and called to be saints. That is, here's who you are and you are called upon to be who you are.

Now I try to ignore football, but it is football season. And in football season you sometimes have a report about a player, maybe a receiver over or, I don't know, a defensive end. It's supposed to rush a quarterback or a quarterback. And you say this person, you hear them say, this person is an absolute star. He's a stud. He's got so much ability, he makes everybody else look puny in comparison, but he's sure not playing like it. Three interceptions, two drop passes, falling on his face. If you're a star, are you going to act like a star right now? That's a pale imitation or pale illustration of what Paul is saying. The church of Corinth and every church is sanctified, set apart by God. For God, holy and God. And you're called to be saints, sanctified, and saints. You hear the similarity. They're really the same word in the original language. And in this church, really does need it. Let me just tell you what's coming. For the next few minutes. I want to tell you, first of all, that the Church of Corinth is an unlikely place to start a church. And this church wrote to Paul and they wrote about their problems. That's number two. And number three, we're going to look at the centrality of holiness. That's for the next few minutes. So the church was an unlikely place to be called as saints to God. Again, you may know this, but Greece kind of has a big upper level and then it gets narrow and then it comes really narrow, and then it bulges out again. And that little narrow spot is where Corinth is located. I spent some of my life in this in Maryland, the state of Maryland and Maryland has, you know, land over here and it's respectable size. And it gets real narrow, just just six miles across where we lived. It's just six miles across. You could you could say I ran through three states today and only go six and a half miles was very exciting.

And then it got thick again. That's like Corinth, I mean, like this. And then it bulges out. There's all kinds of islands and it can be bad weather. And people said, you know, ships could come in to this narrow spot. And if we do it right, we could have ships come in on this end and move the cargo just six miles, and we avoid hundreds of miles at sea with storms.

And that's what they did. And they would sometimes have wagons to carry the goods. Sometimes they they'd put it on rollers made out of logs, very rounded logs, and they'd roll it for miles. And what that meant was it was a port city, city of sailors. The city had been at sea for a while, and they would take their money and they would squander. And while living at the port. And so Corinth was a city known for sexual irregularity. In fact, the word to Corinthian eyes was a word that was used to describe people who

sinned sexually at that time. So there were traders. But that's not all. It was also a city that had been torn to the ground about 146 BC, and was just nothing for 100 years.

And then it was rebuilt by the decree of the Emperor. And when it was rebuilt, the old customs were gone. And the old restrictions, you might say, were gone. And so the people were living for wealth, and they were open to new things. They lived for pleasure, kind of like United States. They live for wealth, kind of like United States. And they were always open to something new. Now, living for pleasure and wealth is not good, but being open to something new is, in fact, in the city of Corinth. They had an area that was dedicated eight degrees, and they left some slots for some other gods that they might want to add. And Paul, we might say, took advantage of that and said, I will tell you about that God. It is second longest ministry. Their longest was in Ephesus, almost three years, second longest here. God had many people in that paganized city. God sent him friends immediately. Priscilla in a quill, a godly and talented people who were tent makers. Just as he was. He also had the opportunity to speak in a synagogue, a synagogue, or the Hebrews it's called. He said, Jesus is the Christ, and he devoted himself to preaching entirely. When some more of his workers came and they said, stop making tents. We want you to be a preacher and a teacher full time. And so he was and gave himself to the task in that city, in the synagogue he got a little bit of a hearing. But maybe what's most important is that a man named Crispus, who was the synagogue ruler, came to believe, and he also supported the church. So there were extremely well known people. And just as a sidebar, there's been, an inscription found with the name of Christmas from the right time, right place, Jew, Christian. A little bit of confirmation of the city.

So he built a church. It was mostly Gentiles for 18 months, and then he had to leave. And after a while, after Paul left Corinth, a letter arrived and they told him about their problems. They said, we've got partisanship. We've got people who say, I am of Paul, I am of Peter, I am of Paul's. Oh, I, I'm of Christ.

Now, I'm glad that that problem is completely gone from the world of ecclesiology today. I'm glad that it's just nobody thinks that way anymore. I'm on the board of a ministry and we're kind of concerned because the two founders of the ministry, Tim Keller and Don Carson, are both gone. And, I mean, Carson is still alive, but very ill, still a man of God, but very ill.

Let me see. Oh, we need to get a high profile leader. And we probably do, because we need to say, here's our man green, if you know what that is. Also, you know, we put people forward. There are people who are leaders. There's nothing wrong with leaders. There's nothing wrong with leaders. It's good to have leaders. The problem is when you say, my leader is better than your leader, because what you're doing in the end is diminishing the centrality of Christ and forgetting that all Christian leaders are on the same team. They'll love each other, and we make one out to be a rival of the other. They're not Paul Apollos were friends. Partisanship boy, did they have questions. What's this the Bible say? What does God want us to do with our sexuality? Should we get married? What about divorce? What if I'm married a non-Christian? Should I divorce her just because she's non-Christian? And. And what can I eat? Meat that's been sacrificed to idols. And. And what happens when we get together for Lord's Supper?

And it's a feast, and some people just pile all the food on their plates and there's nothing left at the end. What about that? And what about the resurrection? Why would God even care about the resurrection? Isn't it? Isn't it true that the body is unspiritual and it doesn't really matter? Hasn't the resurrection already occurred when Jesus rose?

These are some of the questions they put to him, and as he answers them, he speaks. As an apostle, I want you to listen to two things he says in first Corinthians 7:17. He's addressing the question of divorce. He says this, this is my rule in all the churches. He says, I'm going to tell you about divorce. I'm going to tell you this is my rule in all the churches, because you said Jesus didn't address this. So, I'm addressing it. And it's my rule in every church. It's chapter 14, verse 37. He says at the end of the long discussion of spiritual gifts, he says, if anyone thinks that he's a prophet or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. He's quite confident in his authority as an apostle, even when he's answering questions that I want you to make sure you hear this.

When you hear somebody answering questions, when you hear a teacher or an expert of any kind answering questions, you're our tendency a little bit to say, always just answer a question. And I don't have that question, so I don't need to pay attention. You could have that attitude toward Corinthians and say, well, Paul's just answering questions people had a long time ago.

But no, he says, when I answer question, I'm speaking as an apostle. This is the rule in all the churches full authority. Why? Because when people answer questions, they answer out of their deepest convictions. If somebody else speak personally, if somebody asked me a question in a classroom because I'm mostly a professor over the years, they ask me a question.

I often say something like, thank you for that question. I'm so glad you asked. It doesn't really belong in this course, but I'm so eager to answer that question because it's important. Thank you for asking that important question. Here's the answer that I have. Now. Here's somebody else's answer. I don't have every answer. But here's an answer. In other words, there's a sense in which when somebody answers a question, they're even more speaking out of their deep convictions than when they're writing a treatise.

Because you go back to your core convictions. How do I answer this surprising question? And good teachers will sometimes say, that's a great question. I'm going to ask it exactly as you put it to me. And other times they may say something like, that's a good question. Can I just change it a little bit? Have you heard people say that?

Can I tweak it so it's a little bit more useful to this group of people here? And sometimes, and you may not notice this until I've told you now people will get a question, and they'll say you're getting at an important issue, which means I'm not going to answer your question, but I'll address your topic. And every time somebody answer your question, they're doing that. And so Paul is speaking truly from his heart as he says, please, no factions stand together. You're one. You're sanctified to the Lord. It's his church. It's not the church of this faction or that faction. Live your lives out together. You're holy, he says. Well, that is what he says. That's the overture to what he has for them.

He says, you're the church of Christ. It's sanctified in Christ Jesus to be saints together with all those that are in every place, that is every place of worship. Call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That echoes what we know. First founding moment in the book of Exodus. You are called to be a holy nation. God tells Israel.

And then in Hebrews chapter ten, verse ten, to pick just one other passage, it says, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ. Once for all. We're consecrated to God. That is God's great gift. He gives us holiness, and then we grow into holiness. Now the sad truth is, one person said, as I was preparing, that the church of Corinth looked a lot like Corinth and not so much like God,

the Church of God in Corinth looked more like Corinth than God and his character, who live for wealth and live for pleasure. They quarreled. They did very human things. Instead of being just and merciful and kind and loving, gracious as the Lord is. And so there's a call to be saints. Now, despite these problems, Paul speaks a blessing on the church. In verse three it says, grace to you. I don't think I need to explain that, but God's grace rest upon you and peace be yours. May you have God's peace, but you have that well-being and welfare that comes from God. It's not a vague hope, but a hope that God Himself would deliver the church. And then he moves over in the next set of verses to thanksgiving. And again, I think this is marvelous because it's the church is so troubled. He has to start addressing factions, and he does so for three chapters because they're so severe. And yet he says, I am thankful for you. I give thanks to my God always for you. They're quarreling. They're taking each other to court. They're rushing ahead at meals and piling their food. So there's nothing left for other people. They're divorcing their spouses for no reason. And he says, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus.

Now he's saying one thing first. He's saying, no matter how flawed you are, I'm thankful for you. No matter how far short you're falling from God's desire for you. I am thankful for you. Can I encourage you to talk that way to each other, to walk up to people and say, I am thankful for you? I have to say, a lot of you in this church are really good at it.

Keep it up, keep up the good work. Keep on saying I am thankful for you. I see something good and beautiful in you and say it not just in the church building. Said home, said your children. Said to your fellow workers, I am thankful for you. He says he praises the church despite its flaws. I'm I always give thanks for you because God's grace was given to you in Christ Jesus.

Then he says a few more things he says in verses five, six, and seven that he's thankful for their spiritual gifts. I'm thankful that in every way you are enriched in him in all speech and knowledge. This is to say, you know and you speak out of what you know to bless other people. As a testimony about Christ was confirmed.

That is to say, speaking about Christ, the implications of their salvation, so that you do not like any gift. Have ever noticed that God gives gifts, gifts to people that are a little bit surprising? Yeah. You know, we have an elder in this church, Steven Bun, who ministers to professional golfers. And I do not watch golf. I do not play golf, but I know a lot of people do. So I pay a tiny bit of attention. And I was at the gym, recently, and I saw a golf contest as it was ending and a certain person won by one stroke, and everybody else was in second place by 1 or 2 strokes, second, third, fourth place. And I just thought, I wonder if Stephen knows the guy who won. And I wonder if he's a Christian. And I thought, you know, wouldn't it be great if God just gave a little extra juice to Christian golfers so that, you know, one, you know how when you watch a golf ball roll, it'll just like it'll hit. It seems like it hits a piece of grass and it goes that way and doesn't go in. Why doesn't God just give a little grass favor to all the Christians? So the Christians are just winning week after week. But the strange thing is, some of the greatest athletes in the world are bad people. Some are wonderful and some are not. And some politicians are wonderful people and some are not.

God gives, just surprisingly, apparently poured his gifts on this church, the church of Corinth. It gave, so far as we can tell, the amazing number. Yeah, so they had to talk about gifts for three chapters because they're so gifted, even though they're so immature and so prone to sins, gives thanks for that. Now the

gift of apostleship is over, but I want to make sure we understand that the gifts, we'll get to it much later, but the gifts of God, the gifts of God, still largely remain.

In the book of First Corinthians, he mentions gifts like leadership and teaching and prophecy. Prophecy, like the prophets is gone. But prophecy, like teaching God's truth with power remains and generosity. So many of these gifts remain to this day. Can I just tell you that for years in this church, people have met in the pastor's office after the first service, especially sometimes after the second service, and prayed for healing?

Now, that doesn't mean that we think that miracles occur. Capital and miracles like miracles that Jesus performed. I tell you, rise and walk. Or Paul, stand up in the name of Jesus. We're not saying they're miracles like that occurring, but we do believe that God still heals people today and heals people. Surprisingly, radically. I walked into a meeting once when I was a full time pastor years ago of new elders.

There were 13 or 14 men and as they walked in, two of them, two of the group I should have written down, I can't remember 13 or 14. Two of them had been told they would never walk again. Then they walked right in. We'd laid hands on them and they were healed. Now it took a little while, but God healed them.

God heals people, and people who are in ministry believe that healing still occurs beautifully. Surprisingly, by God's supernatural power to this day.

So Paul gives thanks, Paul gives thanks, and I want you to give thanks. I want you to give thanks to your children, for your children when they cry and whine, I want you to give thanks for your husband or your wife or your friend. When you disagree with them sharply and are stunned that you don't agree about this or that, I want you to give thanks for God's material provision when you don't have as much as you would like, and maybe not even close.

I want you to give thanks for your bodily strength when you're not nearly as strong as you wish you were, because Paul gives thanks for a bunch of saints who were not very saintly all the time. And I want you to know that Paul gives another blessing in verses 7 to 9. Second half of seven and then eight and nine.

He says, you're not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is, say, for the day when Christ comes and we see him face to face in all of his glory. You have these gifts as you wait for that day, and Jesus Christ will sustain you to the end, guiltless not because you do nothing wrong to be guilty about, but guiltless because you're guiltless in Christ, who sanctifies you, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we stand before Christ, we will be declared innocent because of the work of Jesus. And God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. On the last day you will be there, you will be guiltless. God will take you to the last day. God will not let you perish.

No one will snatch you out of his hand. God will complete the good work he has begun in you. He will carry you to the end. Now there's a very interesting passage, just a few verses in Second Timothy, the dearly love that described this in a paradoxical way. It says this if we have died with him, that's Christ. We will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself. They think, wait a second, what does that mean? First of all, it's easy. If we died to sin with Christ, to ourselves, with Christ, we live with him. That's

easy. If we endure, will reign with him. That is to say, we will reign in the new heavens, the new earth. That's also easy. If we deny him, he will deny us. That is, I say, if somebody says, I do not know who Jesus Christ is, I repudiate him. Then Jesus says, acknowledge me, I'll acknowledge you. Deny me. I'll deny you. That's the unbeliever. But if we're faithful. So I'm going to add the word merely if we're merely faithless. That is to say, if we fall short of the faith, if we live faithless, not full-blown denial of Christ, but a real moment of faith less ness, of lacking faithfulness. If we lack faithfulness, maybe even a big way like the Corinthians. He remains faithful. That is to say, he's faithful to you. Your eternal status does not depend on the vacillations of the moment or a bad year that you have, or a bad week because he cannot deny himself that. And what he's saying here is that he has affirmed, mistaking his own reputation on his ownership and love abiding love of us.

Personal word. When I take vows, I often have pangs. You know, before I got married, the day of my marriage, my wife and I got married in that very short, very foolish era when people wrote their own vows. I have no idea how this escaped the bad idea box, but it did. We wrote our own vows. People encouraged us to do this. Which meant, of course, that since the preacher didn't know the vows, we had to memorize our own vows. And there's a little not exactly a secret. I can't memorize anything. I cannot memorize anything. So I couldn't memorize my vows. And I'm looking at my vows like I have no idea what I'm going to say.

Some words are going to come out of my mouth now. Debbie had her words beautifully memorized. She looked me in the eye with such passion and joy, and she said the vows and I'm like, I don't know what I'm going to say next. Just words came out of my mouth. Somebody said, I never heard the vows that way before. I said, you better believe it.

But I quivered for hours because I thought I looked at what I wrote down. I mean, I promise to love you as Christ loved the church. I can't do that. What made me write that down? I promise to serve you and sacrifice for you like I'm such a sinner. I'm not going to do that. I'm going to fall so far short of my vows. But I take vows to become a pastor. When I was ordained and installed, I, I goodness I am going to fail on every one of these vows. I'm going to. I'm going to be a liar. I'm faithless, by the way, you are to hate to say, but he remains faithful because God does not judge me based on my worst moments. He judges me based on what he sees that I trusted in Christ. I'm sorry for my sins, and I lean on him and I do try. I do try to follow, and that's what counts. Because he is faithful when we are faithful less. And that's why we and the whole church of Corinth and all the people of God, get to have this blessing at the end of First Corinthians chapter one, little section God is faithful. He called you into fellowship with his son. You will not lack any gift as you wait for the revealing of Christ, and he will sustain you to the end. Praise God, praise God!

Let's pray. Be father, I do pray that you would learn as much as we can. So many things to learn about the Corinthians and your letters to the Corinthians. We're thankful for those letters. I'm amazed that the Apostle Paul was so thankful for this church that caused him so many headaches. I pray that we would learn from that, that we'd be thankful people, even when things aren't quite the way we would like. Thankful that take care of us and love us even when we. Disappoint you. Disappoint ourselves. He promised you will sustain us to the end because you're faithful, even if we're not so, Lord, we have hope. We have hope from your word, and we have hope from you. Receive the prayers that we offer up asking you to make us saints, that we would be who we are more and more, even by studying Your word in your name.

Amen.