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Pondering Christ in 1 Corinthians

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Well, hello, and welcome to Ponder by NorthernLife. We're having a conversation about the Word of the Lord as it was preached to us on Sundays and as we encounter it in our everyday lives. My name is Jack.

I'm here with Jono, Ben and Tristan, and we are talking about Ben's sermon on 1 Corinthians. I'm a huge fan of 1 Corinthians. I feel like it's such a relevant book for us.

Ben, I guess as you were researching, thinking, preparing this sermon, were there any interesting facts or realisations you came to that maybe didn't make it to the sermon that you want to share with us before we start?

Once again, I have to disappoint you and say not really. Only because I watched the Bible Project video on 1 Corinthians, and Tim Mackey just shows how the structure of 1 Corinthians is so easy. Five sections, problem, gospel response.

And so the sermon pretty much wrote itself. I'm like, well, there's my five points. Whack an introduction on there, whack a conclusion.

And that was the sermon. One thing I will say in answer to the question is, I had never realised that Paul spent a year and a half in Corinth. That's quite a long time.

As I said, the second longest amount of time that he spent with any of the churches, second to Ephesus for three years.

There's just a lot of relationship and teaching and discipleship that happens in that time, which is why Paul can speak so strongly to them and kind of demonstrate such a connection to them. It's interesting.

Yeah, that is an interesting point. I hadn't realised he'd been there that long. Okay, do you want to run us through what the sermon structure was just as a quick refresher?

Yeah, the sermon which wrote itself, thank you to Tim Mackey, is five problems that the Corinthians were having and Paul responds to each of those problems with the gospel.

And in particular, with a specific portrait of Jesus that Paul lifts up. So the first problem is division and the solution is Christ crucified. For the problem of sex, Christ sanctified.

For the problem of freedom, Christ glorified. For the problem of disorder, Christ embodied. And for the problem of death, Christ resurrected.

And so we sort of ended the sermon asking the question of what does it mean for us to learn how to respond to our real world problems with the gospel, the way Paul does.

And what I love about your sermon and 1 Corinthians as a whole is for each of those five problems, I could easily see or have heard of churches today that struggle with those issues.

And so I feel like it was so relevant and real. Jono, Tristan, reflections from you guys?

Yeah, I really enjoyed the sermon. I was listening, I would listen to it for the first time this morning on the way here. And I really enjoyed 1 Corinthians and Ben, you did a good job.

But I also like the structure in which Paul answers, the answers to the letter from Corinth because he's getting updates from Chloe's household on the one hand.

But he's also getting, he's always responding with the now about this, this he's addressing issues, which is such a good template for using what we have, the truth to its full potential, like, or at least getting

to its full potential by actually answering people's questions, not with second opinions, verse 2, but rather something from the Bible, which is, which is always encouraging.

A couple of weeks ago, Ben, you talked about that quote about they've had this, leaders who've had their spines filleted and they've lost their backbone.

But I really appreciated remembering that Paul is just courageous with truth, just, and he is, it's coming out of love. He loves these people that he led to the Lord.

He planted the church there, gave them the gospel, and he's like, oy, what's going on? Let's get back on track.

And that's an interesting connection to Two Corinthians, which we looked at last night, where Paul is just broken and weak. There's quite a contrast between Paul's tone of voice, between one and Two Corinthians.

I also noticed that it's like he's all business in One Corinthians, and then he's able to be vulnerable in Second Corinthians, I think. But that's probably, we should leave that for our Second Corinthians podcast.

So, Ben, first issue, you talked about division. This is probably the big issue in Corinth, and it kind of flows out into some of the others.

And you talked about the need to be united to not let the origins of our faith divide us. And totally on board with that. But in my mind, I'm thinking a lot about what about this?

What about that? Because I think, we would agree, and you would agree, that there are some things worth dividing over, right? Now, the origins of our faith, you know, that's a silly thing to be divided over.

But there are genuine issues. I mean, for example, in the issues of denominations that are worthwhile being divided over. So what is it appropriate to be divided over?

And where do we ignore disagreements in order to be unified?

It's a good question. It's what some smart people have called theological triage, which is the idea that not every idea in the Bible is of equal importance. I heard John Mark Comer talk about this once.

He said, there are some things that we die for, some things that we divide for, and some things that we just decide for.

So if you have a different opinion on the role of tongues in church services, we can just agree to disagree. That's not going to divide us.

But if, but there are certain things that are of such crucial importance to Christianity that we will die for them.

I'm thinking of the divinity of Jesus, the fact that he was a real human being who was also God, who died for our sins and who rose again.

It's like, I will die on that hill, because that is the heart of Christianity, Christ crucified. And then there are other things that are legitimately reasons to divide for.

I think one example could be people who have strong views on the way that men and women should relate to each other in church and in the family.

It's, we can agree to disagree, but it will be hard for us to do church together if you have strong opinions on those topics. It's like, how does church function if we disagree on that?

I think that is an example of one of the things that could be worth dividing over, so that we can have unity in our churches, that we can be united in the absolute fundamentals, but then within our church, we

agree on these other issues as well.

Well said.

How do we hold on to Christ in the midst of those divisions?

When we're relating to Christians that might have some very different perspectives, even on secondary issues, sometimes the secondary issues, I feel, can take centre stage.

So I guess, how do you guys think we could keep Christ crucified as our centre stage in the midst of people who we might have very strong and very emotional disagreements with?

Paul says in 1 Corinthians, I resolved to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

It's quite a profound statement that I'm just thinking that has to mean something like, in every conversation that Paul had with the Corinthians, they were reflecting on the cross together.

Every time we gather together, we bring our minds back to the gospel that we are dead in our sin, but Christ died for our sins, Christ crucified, which I always aim to do when I'm leading worship, to not let a

Sunday morning or a Sunday night go past where I don't mention that as the thing which brings us together. Because something I didn't mention in the sermon, it's just that beautiful idea that the ground at the

foot of the cross is level. There's no hierarchy. We are equally, we stand on equal ground before the cross. Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Baptists, Pentecostals, we all need the cross.

And so Christ crucified is the foundation that brings us all together. So at the very least, keeping that fact before our minds is a compelling reason for unity.

It's a hard thing to do, to express in some ways, express anger that is righteous to defend the truth.

You know, that's so we've talked about that this year about anger being normally something to avoid, but every now and then it's required because it is what love produces.

We love something worth defending and it produces anger. And I feel like that's often what happens. Like just like you said, these issues come up that are really hotly contested.

And it's like, wow, it's hard to be loving when you are fighting for something. So I feel like it's often a process in community, that there's a sort of an outburst of truth defence. And there's like, oh, okay.

I'm also needing to be at peace with my brother or sister. So yeah, I just am acknowledging that when there's something that needs to be fought about on the table, it gets messy.

And I think that's sort of the norm in a way. When you think of Jesus, he's fully righteous, but when he's defending truth, he goes pretty hard at the Pharisees.

So what's to say there's not a pharisaical element in the church that you're fighting against?

I did a youth talk. It was titled Unity and Community in Term 2. And one of the main things that I found in Corinthians with the division part is people are seeking human wisdom over godly wisdom.

And like, I think, like David Stalin, one of my lecturers, gave a great line. He was like, wisdom is not found through thinking, it's found through revelation by the spirit.

And when we are fuelled with emotions and strong opinions, and those things create division, I feel, especially for me, a lot of the time I'm relying on my human wisdom.

I'm not giving it to god and saying, Lord, reveal something here. He's not in the forefront of my mind when I'm fuelled by emotion that leads to confrontation and division.

So I think, especially in Chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians, it's a clear message of see godly wisdom through the fear of the Lord, rather than yourself.

Moving now to the second problem, sex.

So your solution to that was Christ sanctified. Sorry, not your solution, Paul's solution to that. Christ sanctified.

And you draw on this image Paul gives of our bodies as a temple, these sort of holy places where the Holy Spirit dwells. And I think we've all heard that phrase, my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

It gets thrown around a lot in Christian circles. I guess I want to ask, for an expansion of what that means, how do I treat my body as a holy thing?

Yes, obviously don't do sexual immorality, but is there more to it than that? What do you guys think?

Yeah, as I mentioned in the sermon, a lot of the background in Corinth seems to be Platonism. That's the ideas of Plato. And Platonism, in simplest terms, is body equals bad, spirit equals good.

And so there's a view within the Corinthian church that anything to do with the body is bad and evil and gross. And it's like, forget the body, it's just weird and gooey and liquidy and gross stuff.

What really matters is the spiritual stuff, the non-physical stuff. And Paul, in these chapters of Corinthians, reframes them to talk about the goodness of the body.

I mean, the fact that God's great plan in history culminates with Christ in us, the hope of glory, that God's presence would not just be in the temple in one particular place, but inside every believer.

It's an astonishing validation of the goodness of the human body, that God cares about the physical.

The resurrection, as we'll probably talk about later, as Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15, this world is not destined to be burned up and only the spirit survive. God is interested in recreating the physical.

And so, it's just a profound thought that God cares about our bodies and the things that we do. And that applies in sex to, you know, sanctify ourselves to our spouses alone, to not commit sexual immorality.

And it applies to other areas too, that our bodies matter to God.

It's a very good point. It's really building on the fact that Jesus said, I will build my church and my church is the people.

And, you know, it sounds very simple, but it's just really, it's not a holy cathedral that God cares about. It's a holy group of people who are set apart.

You shall be, for me, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. From all the earth, I've called you to be my people. Be holy as I'm holy.

It's just as simple as that. Not an easy thing to do with all aspects of sin.

But yeah, it's just getting back to the simple truth that the Spirit lives in a group of people, and He is holy, and He set us apart to be holy as well. Ultimately, through the gospel, through Christ crucified.

Yeah, it's interesting. The temple analogy is used both of individual believers and of the church as a whole. And also, actually, come to think of it, Christ's, His own physical body as well.

It's an interesting metaphor that seems to repeat a lot.

One of the most powerful insights into the importance of all of this is Ananias and Sapphira. In Acts, they struck dead, and you think, what on earth is going on here? This is post-Pentecost.

It's not the Old Testament. But the whole point is, it's a heavy thing to be the temple of the living God.

And I think that, I wonder if that, that example of Ananias and Sapphira, it speaks against the divorcing of spiritual concepts from the physical, which is that Platonistic idea that you've talked, Ben.

But I mean, I feel like it's a fairly common idea in, like, it's existed in Christianity at various points.

The idea that the spiritual is higher and the physical either is lower or doesn't matter, but the two are intimately connected. God does actually care about your body.

You know, we think back to Genesis 1, when he made humanity right out of the dust, and that's a physical thing, he's not talking about their, when he says, this is good, he's not just talking about their souls

or the, you know, the spirits in them, he's talking about the person, the physical body.

But moving on from that, your third point was on freedom, and the excesses of freedom in the Corinthian Church, and Paul's solution you presented was Christ glorified.

Now, I've been thinking about this recently, the idea of glorifying God, which was the old saying, the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

How do we, I sometimes struggle putting the glorification of God front and center. I think I struggle with thoughts about myself and thinking about myself, and thinking about my own needs.

Even when I'm doing an activity that is supposed to be glorifying God, I can't help but think about myself.

How can I shift my mindset to the point where glorifying God is, is the central thing that I want to do with my life?

Keeping front and center the worth of God, the Son and the Spirit, and enjoying His worth, I think is the best way for me to describe it. And you know, you'll use the Word of God to do that.

You'll meditatively, you know, just ponder, soak up the glory of God in creation, and in beautiful moments, just appreciating what is done in relationship, in humanity, in creation, in that which is alive.

It's a work that we do to reorientate our loves.

Yeah, I agree. I reckon it's the key is to have a very, very, very big vision of God. It's like when you, I mean, look up right now, look up as high as you can.

Okay, that didn't work.

We all just looked up and...

Listen, look up right now if you're not driving. What I, when I look up, normally I have to open my mouth because my chin hurts.

It's kind of this image of, if you are literally looking straight up, you have to open your mouth, which is kind of, this is not really working, this image, because you guys are not opening your mouth.

But when you behold something truly, transcendently glorious, like an incredible mount of you, there's something in you that makes you want to open your mouth in awe.

And that's what happens when we get a true vision of the glory of God. And that can happen in worship, coming under his word, in creation, looking at a beautiful view.

It's kind of like time pauses, and you're just in this holy moment of transcendence. And so it's human nature. Please forget that weird mouth analogy.

I don't think it worked.

Keep it in.

It makes sense.

It's just that it didn't work for all three of you.

When we behold God, as he truly is, and of course, the glory of God displayed in the face of Christ above all things, a true vision of that glory cannot help but pull our heart toward him and draw our

attention away from ourselves. And so back to your question, Jack, you said, and I strongly empathize with what you're saying, it's hard to not have thoughts about yourself even when you're supposedly doing things

for God. The solution is get a bigger vision of God.

And the bigger the vision of God, the more it will pull your soul and your heart outwards in loving God, which is that image of when you behold him, your jaw can't help but drop in awe and wonder.

Just to add while we're talking about awe and moments and wonder, I'm a big fan of allowing yourself to be overwhelmed by the presence of God in creation, in really taking hold of an opportunity. Like, that's me.

And I go to the full sense where I'm in tears or I'm just overwhelmed. Like, it's a truly... Like, it's a feeling that I encourage everyone to try and get to.

Like, just allow yourself to be disarmed by what God is putting in front of you, because it gets you to a place where you start to appreciate a lot more.

Is viscerality a word? Might be.

Let's assume that it is.

What you're describing, I think visceral is a good word to describe what you're saying, but I wonder if viscerality is a word that it's just the immersion of oneself in reality.

Well, we might move now to our palate cleanser question.

Once again, sponsored by Patrick Gross. I think you'll like this one, Jono. If you were chosen by mistake to represent Australia in the Olympics, what sport do you think you'd have the best shot in?

Tristan, we know it's deadlifting for you.

No, no.

I think shooting. You know that Turkish guy?

Oh, really?

I reckon I could do that.

You reckon you could shoot this one?

I look pretty cool. I could do it for sure.

Yeah, maybe archery. Archery? Because I used to do well against Lockie on the Wii archery.

Come on.

I'll say field hockey.

Field hockey? I'm not, really?

That was my sport. Love field hockey.

You know, I don't have a sporting bone in my body, but I don't know, rowing or cycling. What was it? No, not cycling.

No, I hate the eco bike. All right. Well, I think that will do us.

Thank you guys for coming on the pod. Thank you guys all for listening. And I hope you have a really blessed week and are able to glorify Christ.

Bye bye.