



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

1 Corinthians

“Grace to You”

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark. When Mark was giving the announcements, I thought of Howard Prior because years ago when Howard would give the announcements, he would make that statement that Mark made. We preached through the Bible book by book, verse by verse. He would say that every Sunday, and that is what we have done from the beginning through Dr. Johnson's ministry, through my ministry, and that is what we are going to do again this morning. We begin a new series, as Mark said. We are going to begin a series in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

So I assume you all have your bibles. Open up to 1 Corinthians 1 and we will read the first nine verses. "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the Will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come before the throne of grace with grateful hearts. We thank you for this day, for this Lord's Day, and we thank you for the privilege of doing just that, coming before the throne of grace. That's a privilege reserved for your children, for those whom you have saved, those whom you have sanctified, those whom you have made to be

your people. We are members of your family and we have access to the throne of grace at every moment of our life. In fact, you invite us to come boldly to the throne of grace, and so we do that. We don't come before you because we have some sense of merit or because our need is so great that you must hear us; we come to the throne of grace because, as I said, you have shed your grace upon us. We'll study that this morning.

We are reminded repeatedly in these first verses of 1 Corinthians of your grace, your sovereign grace, your transforming grace. We can come before you because of that. We are debtors to mercy alone, and we give you praise and thanks for all that we have in Christ and that we can look to you at every moment, come to you in prayer at any moment and know that you hear us. So Father, we begin by thanking you for this time when we can pray and thanking you for this hour in which we can read and study your Word, and we pray that you bless us. We pray that you would open our minds to understand the things that we've read, the things that we'll consider. We pray that you would give us a sense of the burden of the passage, what it is that Paul is stressing and how it applies to us because it certainly does.

All of this book, all 66 books of the Bible apply to us, and so we pray that you would make the applications to us, Father. By your grace, we have new hearts, we're new creatures in Christ. We have new minds with the facility to grasp the things of your Word. We have the capabilities of it, but apart from the Spirit, the minds won't work correctly. We will not function correctly. We are dependent upon you to open our minds, to guide us in our thinking, to illuminate us, and so we look to you to do that. Teach us and build us up in the faith. We give you thanks for this Word and this particular letter, this book that we will study, what it has to say to us, and we thank you that we have a teacher in the Holy Spirit that will guide us, and so we pray for His ministry, that it will go unhindered, that you would help us set aside all of the details and issues of life and concentrate on your inerrant Word and what you have to say to us in it this morning.

Lord, we have other needs. We have material needs as well, and we pray for those. We can look at the list of prayer requests in the bulletin; we know that that's just a partial list. We know that there are other needs and you know the needs that this congregation has that we don't even know, but we pray for all of those who are in particular need. We think of those who are sick and we know that some of our members are gravely ill. We pray for them. We pray for some, you know, some of the young women are expecting children in the near future. We pray that you would bless the deliveries and make them safe and bless the children that are born. Father, bless those who are without employment. We pray that you would open doors of opportunity for them. We pray for those who are discouraged. We pray that you would help them recall the great promises we have and pray if there are any in our midst this morning who

are discouraged that this text will be a great encouragement to them and lift them out of their discouragement.

We look to you, Lord, to bless us in every way. We pray that you'll do that, that you'll build us up in the faith this morning and you will equip us for the week to come. We don't know what lies ahead. Maybe just another week or maybe one with some sudden, unexpected crises and we pray that you'd prepare us for those. We know that you'll be with us through the midst of them. We thank you for that. Thank you for your faithfulness, and it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

[Message] We often hear it said that there's no perfect church. That's a truism; we all know that. What we may not know is just how imperfect a church can be. If so, there's no better example of that than the church of Corinth. It is the quintessential imperfect church. It was full of problems. Problems of pride, divisions, immorality, but that is one reason this is such a beloved church and important church – its problems are typical. Reading the letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthians is like looking in a mirror. We learn about ourselves and the struggles that churches have. We learn about what we are to avoid as well as what we are to do by studying First and Second Corinthians. So this morning we're going to begin a series in 1 Corinthians in the hope that through our studies, we can at least make some strides toward coming a little nearer to perfection.

And if it is true that we learn from other people's mistakes, then we can learn a lot from the Corinthians. They were a church very much like our own in a city very much like our own. Corinth was a city of commerce. It was a city of entertainment and it was a city of luxury. It was located on a narrow strip of land called the Isthmus of Corinth, which joined mainland Greece to the Peloponnesus. To the northeast was Athens, to the south was Sparta. On either side of the five-mile-wide isthmus were ports, so the trade routes to the east and west intersected those from the north and south, putting Corinth at the crossroads of business. That made Corinth a cosmopolitan place where Romans and Greeks, Asians, Egyptians, and Jews came to mingle and make money and also be entertained.

Tourists flocked to Corinth every two years for the Isthmian games, second only to the Olympic games, where they witnessed great athletic contests but also cultural endeavors like poetry readings. So Corinth was a bustling, ambitious city, a large city with a population of about a half a million people. It was a place of prosperity, consumerism, and pluralism. There was philosophy and religion in Corinth. The Jews went to the synagogue and the pagans visited the temples. The great columns of the Temple of Apollo still stand in the ruins of that city. Rising above the city was Acrocorinth, a mountain that overlooked both the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. On top was the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, where, according to the

ancient geographer, Strabo, a thousand prostitutes practiced their trade. Corinth was the vanity fair of the Roman world.

It's not surprising then that Paul said he came there in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. It was a city of successful merchants, strapping athletes, and self-confident people, and Paul came preaching a crucified carpenter as Savior. What appeal could a gospel like that have to a place like Corinth? Well, he arrived near the end of his second missionary journey. He had wandered across Asia, been beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, chased out of Thessalonica and Berea, and laughed out of Athens. When he finally arrived in Corinth, he was tired. His companions had stayed behind in Macedonia, so Paul was alone, and the sight of this flashy metropolis was a little overwhelming. Who is sufficient for these things, he thought. But Luke writes in Acts 18 that he soon met some fellow Christians.

God's faithful like that. In our moments of weakness and a little despair, He's aware of every condition and every need and He meets those needs and He did so with Paul. Comes there alone, wondering how he's going to minister in this place, when he meets Aquila and his wife Priscilla who, like Paul, were tentmakers. So they joined together. They encouraged one another, they worked together, and most importantly they ministered together. Paul began preaching in the synagogue, and he did that until he was kicked out. He went next-door to the house of justice where he was joined by Crispus who was the ruler of the synagogue, so it wasn't a failed ministry in the synagogue at all. He ministered in the city for 18 months, and in that time many people believe some Jews mainly Gentiles and people from all walks of life, a whole social spectrum was covered in that church in Corinth. A few wealthy people and many poor people.

Sometime later, when Paul was in Ephesus, he got word about the conditions of things in the church at Corinth and was made aware of all of the problems in that church. It came first from people who personally arrived in Ephesus from Corinth, people who had an eyewitness account of what was taking place there, and they reported that there were cliques in the congregation. Then he received a letter from some of the Corinthians. They had questions. They had questions about marriage, they had questions about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and other issues. So to answer questions and solve problems, he wrote First Corinthians. It's actually the second letter that he wrote to the church. We know that because in chapter 5 in verse 9, he speaks of a letter that he wrote before, a letter which has not survived, and so 1 Corinthians is really 2 Corinthians, and when you read 2 Corinthians, you realize that that's really 4 Corinthians.

But we're in 1 Corinthians as we know it, and in it Paul deals with a variety of issues. He first corrects some grave sin in the church, party spirit, immorality, and lawsuits among

believers. That's in chapters 1 through 6. In chapters 7 through 14, he answers questions about marriage and public worship. He explains the Lord's supper, the purpose of it, the use of spiritual gifts in the meetings of the church and especially in that section of chapters 12 through 14, the gifts of prophecy and tongues. Well, in the midst of that and that part of the letter in chapter 13, Paul gives that classic description of love, one of the best-known passages and chapters in all of the New Testament – all of the Bible, for that matter – but the subject of love is not restricted to that chapter. Love edifies, he says in chapter 8. It's really the solution to so many of the problems that the Corinthians faced. In fact, it's the solution to so many of the problems in the church in every age. It may be saying too much to say that love is the solution to all of the problems, but I think we can say that without love, none of the problems of the church will be solved.

Paul lays great emphasis upon the need of love for the brethren. In chapter 15, he deals at length with the subject of the resurrection of the body and then he concludes the book in chapter 16 with various exhortations and greetings. First Corinthians has been called an occasional letter, and what that means is it was a letter written to the immediate needs of a particular people, and, of course, needs that occurred and people who lived 2,000 years ago. But that doesn't make it irrelevant for us today – far from it. Man is the same. Our nature hasn't changed and our problems of pride and lust and ignorance are the same. So 1 Corinthians is very much a relevant book for the church today, as it is and has been a relevant book for the church in every generation. It gives us principles for daily living, it gives us hope for eternity, and it gives us guidelines for how the church is to function. It opens on a firm note of authority.

Paul begins by stating his credentials for answering questions and solving problems. He is an apostle. He is a representative of Christ. That's what an apostle was. Literally, the word "apostle" means one who is sent, and so there is that general meaning of the word, but this has a restricted meaning, a very specialized meaning. Here, it refers to a select group of men sent out in the authority of Christ. According to Ephesians 2:20, they are the foundation of the church, second only to Christ who is the chief cornerstone. They spoke with his authority. There are no apostles today; they were a specific group of that first generation of the church. Paul was one of them. So as an apostle, Paul speaks with authority. He wasn't offering personal opinions. He was God's spokesman and he establishes that fact here at the outset of the letter. But the overriding theme of his greeting is the sovereign grace of God, which called him to be an apostle, and he will say called them to be saints and will keep them to the very end.

God is faithful, he says in verse 9. And let me tell you this: That is a message that

imperfect people in imperfect churches need to hear and hear repeatedly. We are not sufficient for the mission that has been given to us. We saw that mission a few weeks ago when we concluded our studies in Matthew. We've been sent out into the world to make disciples. We're not sufficient for that. We're not sufficient for the daily responsibilities of life that are ours as Christians. We are not sufficient but God is and He is faithful. Paul stresses that here when he explains how he came to be an apostle. It wasn't by his personal merit or ambition, and you certainly know that if you've read through the book of Acts and you come to chapter 9 and you read about Paul and you read about his conversion when he was appointed to be an apostle. He wasn't seeking a position in the church; he was seeking to destroy the church when in the midst of all of that, a bright light cuts him down, he's converted, and he's brought to Christ. No, it was all of God. It's all by God's calling and Will, and that is consistently how God works in the lives of every individual, but you see it in the lives of the great saints throughout the Bible.

Look at Jeremiah and his calling and in the first chapter of that book by the prophet, he's called by God. He was appointed by Him. Jeremiah complained. He protested. He's too young, he doesn't speak well. So God put his words in his mouth. He took the initiative. It's all of God. He always takes the initiative, and let me say this, we will never understand the work of God in salvation, in the Christian life, in history, if we don't understand that about Him, that he always takes the initiative. We'll never understand grace unless we understand it to be sovereign grace, unless we understand it to be God's work from beginning to end. He takes the initiative and he did that with Paul and he did that with the Corinthians. Paul describes them in verse 2, first as the church of God and then as saints by calling. They are God's church. They belong to Him.

The old German theologian Bengel saw the irony here. He wrote, "God's church, even in Corinth, even in that worldly city, God had His people and His witness who were His saints." Now, no one reading 1 or 2 Corinthians would have thought to call the Corinthians saints. These are the very people that Paul calls carnal in chapter 3, fleshly, worldly. They are not what people think of as saints, but that's what Paul says they are, and his application of the word to the Corinthians indicates what a saint is and is not. Saints are not super Christians. They are not morally perfect people who have been canonized by the church. The church doesn't make saints. Saints make up the church. They're not a special class, an elite group of Christians, or necessarily mature Christians. They are quite simply people who have been set apart for God. "Saint," like the word "sanctify," has the idea of holy. It's from the same root. And the word "holy" basically means separate or set apart.

Let me give a couple of examples of that. One is rather startling, I think. The ancient

pagan religions had temple prostitutes, male and female. You see this in the Old Testament. It was typical of Canaanite religion. It was typical of pagan religion there in Corinth. The Corinthians had a thousand of those temple prostitutes in that city. In the Old Testament, such people are called holy. *Kedesh* is the word. Now, they weren't morally pure – far from it. They were holy in the sense that they were set apart for religious functions. The utensils in the temple, inanimate objects, were called holy and they're called holy not because there was any moral purity about them but they were called holy because they were set apart from common use and dedicated to religious functions. That's the basic idea of "saint." Saints are people who have been set apart for God and set apart for holiness, set apart for purity, for God's use.

And I might say this is a done deal. Paul isn't saying we hope to become saints and we are striving to be sanctified; we already are. This has happened. That's the full description he gives here. The Corinthians had been sanctified, meaning they had been set apart, they are saints, that is their position with God, that is the position of every believer in Jesus Christ. We've been set apart, we are saints, we are holy in His sight, we have been set apart from the world and dedicated to Him. Believers in Jesus Christ do not need to struggle in order to gain God's acceptance. We have that through our union with Christ. It is a permanent relationship, and we can rest in that. In fact, we must understand and rest in that if we're to progress in the Christian life. To know that we are absolutely acceptable to God, we've been justified, declared, righteous, we are legally accepted by Him, and nothing will ever change that. We are forever saints.

Now, we have a long way to go, just as the Corinthians did, but that is what God has done for us. He has chosen us, He's called us out of the world, and He's put us in a relationship with Himself. That's who we are. That's our position. Saints are sinners saved by grace. The Corinthians remind us of that. In fact, reading through this book, you might wonder if these people could really be saved, but they were. And we need to remember that when we are tempted to judge others in their behavior. These people and this book stand as a testimony to the sovereign grace of God from beginning to end, and the persevering grace of God. He is patient with His people. It is that constant, powerful, life-changing grace that we need, and it's what Paul wishes or prays for them to have – that's verse 3. "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is God's free, unmerited gift, especially the gift of Himself to us, but also His power to transform us. You see it in the one sense in our position.

His grace has established us in a certain position before Him, but now He works out that position or He begins to conform our life to that position that we have with Him as saints. He begins to make us saints in reality, in practice, in experience, through His transforming

power, which we need constantly to survive in this world of temptation. Peace, that which he prays secondly for them, is wellbeing. It's not simply absence of conflict. It's more than that. It is spiritual prosperity. This is not some formal greeting that Paul is giving to the Corinthians. We have that, you know, we write our letters "Dear Mom," "Dear John," and we may mean it. We may really mean "you are a very dear person to me," but generally, that's just the way we begin our letters. You've got to begin some way, and so "Dear [whatever]" is how we usually do it. And the Greeks had a very formal way of beginning theirs, too. "Grace and peace to you" was often how they would begin their letters, and I'm sure it was just a formality as well, but this is no formal greeting. Paul means what he says. He means all of this.

This third verse is his wish or prayer for the Corinthians because only by grace, only by God's power, His transforming work in their lives, will they prosper at all, will we prosper at all. Well, in this greeting, he includes the name Sosthenes. They both greet the Corinthians, and it seems clear from the introduction that they were very familiar with this person Sosthenes. So who was he? Well, it's interesting that in Acts 18, which describes Paul's ministry there in Corinth, we come across the name Sosthenes, and if it's the same Sosthenes, then this is quite an example of the very grace that he wished for the Corinthians, and I think that's probably the case. Sosthenes was the leader of the Corinthian synagogue, which was hostile toward Paul and at one point had the apostle dragged to court for preaching the gospel. The court was outdoors, the court was the bema seat. It's a large stone platform where the judge would come hear the case and render his judgment.

So they brought Paul before the judgment seat, they brought Paul before the judge, the Roman judge Gallio. He listened to the case briefly and then he dismissed it as completely unimportant, it was a matter for the Jews to settle among themselves, and so he dismissed the case, and that so angered the Jews that they grabbed Sosthenes and beat him up right in front of the judgment seat, right before Gallio the judge. The beating may have been a blessing because it seems to have led to his conversion. The man who had been Paul's enemy was now serving with him in the progress of the gospel. Now, that is the grace of God. Now, in verses 4 through 9, Paul expresses his heartfelt thanks for the Corinthian church. He'd spent a year and a half with them and he loved these people. But his thanks is not for what they had done for him but for what God had done for them. They in fact had caused trouble and then he begins correcting them very soon into this letter.

Still, for all of their faults, these Corinthian Christians had been genuinely changed. They were different from their fellow citizens there in Corinth. The contrast between the church and the city was impressive but the difference was due completely to God's grace. That's the basis of all Paul's thanksgiving in these verses. That's what he says in verse 4: "I

thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus." God's grace affected every aspect of the Corinthians' lives. He made them a new creation. But in verse 5, Paul focuses on two areas where God enriched them especially and that was in their speech and knowledge. Now, that's interesting and I think it's important to remember because knowledge was a problem in Corinth. We'll see that as the book unfolds. The Corinthians in fact became very arrogant about their breadth of knowledge, and Paul warns in this letter about the problem of pride that can come with knowledge. "Puffs up," he says.

Now, I think to understand what he means by that, we need to understand that the problem is not in the gift but in the receiver of the gift. It's not in knowledge, it's in one's attitude about knowledge. Pride is already there, it's in all of us, and knowledge, which is pure and good, can stir up that evil part of us. Knowledge is a great gift. It is a prize worth striving for and sacrificing to obtain. I remember hearing one of Dr. Johnson's sermons. I don't even remember where I heard this and when I heard it, but I remember him talking about early in his life when he had just become a Christian, one of his prayers was that God would give him an uncommon knowledge of His Word. Well, God doesn't just give that, and Dr. Johnson has pointed that out. One must strive for it, but that's a good ambition. Knowledge is good. Knowledge is important. Knowledge is essential for wisdom.

There'll be no wisdom if we don't have knowledge, it's fundamental to that. There'll be no growth in the Christian life if there's no knowledge. So the problem isn't knowledge, but knowledge plays a big part in this book, and the Corinthians had caused themselves some problems in having it, but God had blessed them with knowledge. God had given that to the Corinthians. It came from God as did their marvelous gifts of speech. They had knowledge, they had speech, they had something to say. They had hope to offer their pagan culture and some skill in saying it. This is all speech, Paul says, so I assume it includes public discourse, public and private conversations that they had, but most especially it refers to spiritual gifts of utterance. God had given many to this church. They had the gift of teaching, many of them had that gift, the gift of evangelism. Others had the special gifts of prophecy and tongues, speaking in unknown languages. These are miraculous gifts.

In fact, if you go to chapter 12 where he begins listing the gifts that they had, nine of them that he lists there, many of them are miraculous gifts. Healing, gifts of miracles, gifts of tongues and prophecy. And the presence of those gifts in the church proved the truth of the gospel. That's what Paul says in verse 6, the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you. Those gifts, the miraculous workings within them proved that. Their lives proved it. Their lives were transformed by the gospel and then they were able to use these fabulous gifts

that God had given to them. That verified the truth of what Paul had preached in Corinth. Transformed lives, mighty speech, sermons and the giving of the gospel in a powerful way, and that proof was abundant. They were not lacking in any gift, Paul says. That's what he says in verse 7. They were well-equipped for witness and ministry inside the church and outside the church, out in the marketplace, rubbing shoulders with the pagans. They could say something. They had the ability to do it and they had the message to transform the lives of those people.

Charles Hodge commented that no church was superior to them in these respects. They were blessed with spiritual gifts, the general gifts and those special miraculous gifts. But what really excited them wasn't their gifts but it was their hope. It was the return of Christ. Paul says they were awaiting eagerly the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. That in fact gave impetus, it gave motivation to their Christian lives, as it should ours. One thing that should make us eager to use our gifts and serve Christ is He's coming again. The Bible ends with that hope. We have it all through the Word of God, but we come to the end of the Bible, in the last chapter of the book of Revelation, Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming quickly and my reward is with me." Our service today will be rewarded tomorrow. And the Corinthians knew that, and the Corinthians were looking for Him. Every day, they were thinking this may be the day.

Now, I find that convicting. Do you? Those Corinthians were eagerly awaiting the Lord's return, and I can't say that I'm always awaiting the Lord's return or eagerly awaiting the Lord's return or even thinking about the Lord's return. I should be. I should want to see Him. It will be a great moment when it occurs and it could happen today. That should be our expectation, and if it is, it will be a great motivation – it was to them. They were hopeful. They were not apprehensive about the future or the end as though when it came they might be disqualified. They knew that Christ would keep them and not cast them out, and that's the assurance that Paul gives them in verse 8. Christ will confirm you to the end, he says. Not only that, He will confirm them blameless so that no charge can be brought against them. It's what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, that God always finishes the Work he begins. So the one who enriched the Corinthians with grace and gifts will not only keep them to the very end but also glorify them, make these very imperfect people perfect. Remove every spot or wrinkle when He comes, like a pure bride, as Paul says to the Ephesians. And that's our hope.

And it's not an empty hope because it is based on the character of God. As Paul says in verse 9, God is faithful. Not we are faithful but God is faithful. That is a fact. God is reliable. He makes promises and He keeps them – always. He is immutable; He never changes. That is where Paul put his confidence, not in self, not in the Corinthians and their gifts and their eagerness and all of that. He didn't put it in himself, he didn't put it in them, he put it in God alone, and when we think of all of the dangers that surround us, outside and

inside, all of the temptations we face, we know – if we're realistic, we know that it is only the power of God that can preserve us in faith to the end, and He will do that. Every believer will be kept to the end and glorified. God guarantees that. Faithful is He who calls you and He will bring it to pass.

That's what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and that's what he is saying here to the Corinthians. The God who is faithful is the One who has called us into fellowship with His Son, so he will bring it to pass. He will complete the Work of salvation; He will not lose one of us. Salvation is all of grace from beginning to end. It is God's Work, Paul has stressed that in these opening verses. In fact, the second word of the book is "called," God called Paul – rather, Paul called as an apostle. The Corinthians were saints by calling and now they were called into fellowship with Christ. Three times, Paul mentions God's calling to show that God always takes the initiative and nine times in nine verses, he mentions the name of Christ because blessing is only in Him. There's no blessing outside of Christ. By God's grace, we have been called into fellowship with Him. We have union and communion with Him, the Son of God. We share His life.

What an amazing statement that is here at the end of this introduction, this greeting, that we have been called into fellowship with Christ, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the one John tells us in the first chapter of his gospel created everything. The one who Paul describes in Colossians 1 as the one who holds everything together. The one who holds the universe in all of its vastness together by the will of His power. In fact, the one who's carrying history along, according to the first three verses of the book of Hebrews. That's the one with whom we have fellowship, we have a relationship. By God's grace, we have been called into fellowship with Him, we have communion with Him, we share His life. That is what God has done for us, which means He has done everything for us and He won't ever give us up. He's like a skilled potter and we are like common clay.

I know this about potters, that once they have put their hands to the clay and begin to fashion it and begin to shape it, they cannot take their hands off it until they're finished, and God will never take His hand off of us. God always takes the initiative and what He starts, He always finishes successfully. That is grace, that's sovereign grace. Salvation is all of Him, and we can rejoice in that. It's one thing he makes very clear in these first verses: Salvation is of the Lord from beginning to end. Princeton scholar J. Gresham Machen wrote a book titled *Christianity and Liberalism*. He wrote it – I believe it was in 1923, so it was quite a while ago, but it is still relevant today and well worth your reading. It's not a very big book and it's an excellent book, but in it he explains that liberalism is not a variety of Christianity but a different religion.

In fact, that's why he named it *Christianity and Liberalism*. Liberalism denies the faith. Liberalism denies the fundamentals of the faith, like the deity of Christ and even the need of salvation, but so far as it does talk about it, according to Machen, liberalism finds salvation in man; Christianity, he says, finds it in an act of God. Salvation is in an act of God and the act of God is the death of Christ, the sacrifice of our Lord. He died for sinners so that all who believe in Him might be saved. And all who do, only by God's grace, are saved forever. That's the good news. That's the good news of these first verses of the book. That's the good news we find throughout this book. There's salvation for sinners and God never lets them go, He transforms them. So if you are here without Christ, come to Him. Cannot save yourself. Salvation is a free gift of God, and it is found in Christ alone. Believe in Him and in so doing become a saint in fellowship with Christ, the Son of God. May God help you to do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you that someday we will be the church at rest, but in the meantime, we are on the path to glory and we have struggles. We have struggles in our lives individually, the churches have struggles, and so we pray, Father, that you give us strength, and as we go through this great book of 1 Corinthians that you would teach us and guide us and convict us and give us great wisdom. Thank you for what you've given us in Christ, eternal life. It's your work from beginning to end. We give you all the praise, and we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.