



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

1 Corinthians

"Carnal Christians"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are in 1 Corinthians, starting chapter 3 this morning. We're going to look at verses 1 through 9. Paul writes:

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as to spiritual men, but to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, it is a privilege to be here this morning. We need to be here on a Sunday morning. We need to gather together with the saints. The author of Hebrews reminds us of that, tells us in chapter 10 that we're not to neglect or forsake the gathering together of the saints. Some do that. It's the habit of some, he said, but we are to not forsake

our own assembling together because this is where we come together to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. It's where we encourage one another, and we're encouraged through your Word. It is your revelation to your people, it is inerrant, and as we read it, as we study it, we are encouraged to live the right way.

And we come to a text of Scripture that is particularly important in that regard, that reminds us of our behavior. In fact, it goes beyond that. It goes to the root cause of behavior. It goes to our condition. We see in the bad condition of these Corinthians what can result in the bad behavior that follows and the lack of perspective and the selfishness that follows from not growing in Christ. And so we are reminded of some very basic things in our text. We're reminded that we are to be men and women who are growing continually in our knowledge and obedience. I pray, Lord, that you would convict us of that this morning, that the time we spend together will cause us to want to grow, to know you and to live in a way that pleases you. It's the best life and it's the life that's profitable.

So, Father, we ask you to teach us and build us up in the faith. That's really ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit, and so we pray that His ministry will not be hindered but we will open to it and so you'd open our hearts to receive it, that you would instruct us and build us up in the faith. Bless us spiritually but, Lord, we are a people that are needy materially, physically as well, and so I pray that you would bless us in that way also. We pray that you would bless those who are sick with healing mercy and pray for some in particular who are going through great challenges at this time of their life. They're facing maybe the end of life, and we pray that you would help them to face that well. That is the reality for all of us.

If your Son does not return in our lifetime, we will all go to the grave. Are we ready for that? Are we growing in Christ? That's the only way to be prepared for the end. So, Lord, I pray for those that are in very difficult circumstances, that you'd bless them, bless them physically. We pray for healing if that be your Will. Certainly give

them encouragement. And those who are just going through the struggles of life in the home or at work, we pray that you'd encourage them. The Spirit of God is our comforter and we pray that He would comfort them, remind them of the great promises we have, and just speak to their spirit and encourage them and strengthen them.

And we pray that you'd do that for us as we sit here and worship and think and we consider the text that we've read and we go through it together. I pray that you would instruct us and build us up in the faith and bless us spiritually. We remember the young people who are returning from the retreat today. We pray that you'd give them safe travel, bring them home safely to us, and bless the seeds that have been sown this weekend and encourage them. Father, we pray for our nation, we pray that you'd bless our leaders with wisdom and protection and we pray for this land, that you would bless us, and we think naturally of material prosperity but, Father, we pray for spiritual prosperity in this place, in this land of ours, but in this place here, this church, we pray for that.

So we pray now that you'd teach us and instruct us, build us up in the faith, make this a profitable time together. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] A number of years ago, it was back in the early 1990s, I sat down with the broker who managed my IRA. That sounds kind of important but it was not, it was a small IRA, but it was what I had at the time. So we sat down, I made a little contribution to it as I did annually, and then he looked over the performance of it for the year. He said something like, "Well, you did well here, not too well here, you did okay here, not too well here – all in all, it was a wash." And I guess I should have known what that meant, but I wasn't familiar with that expression. I said, "What do you mean?" Didn't sound good. He said, "Well, you had some gains, you had some losses, but overall, you stayed the same. Your account didn't make anything. It was a wash. Some years are like that."

I thought, "Well, great. A whole year and nothing to show for it." He was casual about it, but it bothered me a lot. Now, we know that things could be worse. We learned – what, a couple of years ago? – that our 401(k)'s could become 201(k)'s but still, to make no progress in your investments is discouraging. That was Paul's experience with the church in Corinth. He had invested much in it, much of his time, much of his labor, and he expected growth. But when he comes to chapter 3, he gives the sad news that they haven't grown. He doesn't illustrate their condition with an example from finance. He'll do that later with gold and silver and precious stones. Here, though, it's physical growth, maturity. They should be men, spiritual men. Instead, they were still infants.

It's a bizarre picture that he gives us. The church had existed for about four years but its people had not grown. Think about that. Imagine for a moment a child is born, it's a handsome boy, the parents are happy and proud. Then duty calls and Dad goes off to war in Afghanistan for four years. When he finally comes home, nothing has changed. His child is still a baby in a crib, being nursed. It's bizarre. It's impossible, physically, but not spiritually. It happened in Corinth. So Paul calls these Corinthians men of flesh. That's the translation that I use in the version I'm using, the New American Standard Bible. It's translated "worldly" in the New International version and in the King James version, it is translated "carnal."

"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." That was the problem. The Corinthians were a wash. They had not grown. So Paul says they are carnal. He's like a physician who has diagnosed his patient's condition. The patient is sick and the disease is carnality, and it is the source of all of the problems in this book, and what 1 Corinthians is is a book of problems. He goes from one problem to another. And the first of the symptoms that he diagnoses or that tells him about this root condition of carnality, the first of the symptoms is factions in the church, party spirit. The church was divided against itself.

In recent times, Christians had been divided over the meaning of this expression "carnal." Is there such a thing as a carnal Christian? That's been a debate for decades. Well, it seems to me the answer is obvious, at least on the face of it, and that is yes. There is such a thing as a carnal Christian. That's what Paul says. That's his word. Paul calls the Corinthians brethren and carnal. They are worldly but they are in Christ. The question, though, is: What does this expression mean? What does it mean to be a carnal Christian? That's the question that we're going to try to answer in this hour, at least shed some light on it.

The subject Paul is dealing with here isn't new. He was dealing with it back in chapter 1. He had learned about divisions in the church, he had condemned them, now in chapter 3, he takes up the subject again, and it continues into chapter 4. It was a major problem in the church and is the reason that he wrote chapter 13 on the importance of love. The Corinthian church lacked love. It had a lot of problems, as I said. They were divided, they were proud, they were gullible, they were in love with worldly wisdom and worldly ways. And it all goes back to this problem of not growing. Paul will be stern with them. Their condition was intolerable. Still, Paul does not question that they are genuine Christians.

He began the book by calling them saints. He thanked God for the grace that had been given to them, the saving grace that had been given to them, and he begins chapter 3 with the same confidence. He calls them brothers. But they are carnal. They are like men of flesh, and so he couldn't talk to them as to spiritual men, he had to talk to them as one talks to an infant, as to infants in Christ. Now, that was fine in the beginning. We all begin as infants, physically and spiritually. Maturity comes with growth spiritually as well as it does physically. And just as you don't stuff steak down infants, you give them milk, so, too, with Christians. When they are young, they are like babies and they need spiritual milk. So Paul says in verse 2, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet able to receive it.

What's the milk that he gave to them? Well, it's biblical teaching. Sound doctrine and moral instruction. He gave the same truth he gave to everyone, only he gave it to them initially in a simple form. Calvin wrote that Christ is milk for babes and strong meat for men, and what he meant by that is that every doctrine which can be taught to theologians can be taught to children. Paul was a wise spiritual father. He didn't push the Corinthians beyond their capacity, and a wise father doesn't push his son or his daughter beyond his or her capacity. He doesn't expect more of them than their age would require, physically or intellectually, and Paul didn't expect more of these Corinthians and demand more of them and give more to them than they could handle, than their capacity could take.

He gave them the teaching that was best suited for them. He gave them the Word of God, he gave them the truth of God's Word, he gave them doctrine, but he gave it to them simply and they received it, they took it. That was then but here he adds, "Even now you're not able, for you are still fleshly." They haven't grown and for that, they're guilty. Again, there's nothing wrong with being an infant, that's normal, but normal infants grow up to be mature adults, and these Corinthians didn't, not spiritually. That's not normal. That's wrong and their guilt is indicted in Paul's description of them as still fleshly. Now, that differs slightly from the expression in verse 1, men of flesh.

In verse 1, it means something like made of flesh. Men are naturally made of flesh, and that describes the Corinthians' spiritual condition. They are like natural men. In verse 3, the ending of the word is different and it gives it the meaning "characterized by the flesh." It indicates the bent of their desires, the bent of their nature and their desires. They are Christians. They have the Holy Spirit but they don't act like it. That's the consequence of their condition. So if I could simplify what Paul is saying here between his description in verse 1, men of flesh, and his description here in verse 3, fleshly, that on the one hand, he describes their condition, their spiritual condition, they're

immature, they're not growing, they're not developing, and that has consequences in their behavior.

We are all both being and acting. We have a condition and there are consequences for that condition. If the condition is good, if we're maturing, the consequences or the results will be good. If the condition is bad, if it's immature, if there's no growth occurring, then of course we're going to behave immaturely. They are not just dull, these Corinthians, they're dreadful. They were living corruptly. They were acting like pagans. They were carnal. Well, what were they doing? What exactly is carnality? We might think of it in terms of sexual immorality. Carnality seems to suggest that, fleshly men seeking fleshly things, and the Corinthian church had a problem with that.

Paul addresses it in chapter 5, but it's one individual and that doesn't seem to have been a widespread problem. The widespread problem in regard to immorality was they tolerated this individual, but it doesn't seem to have been a problem with a lot of people, and it's certainly not the problem in this context. The problem is broader than that, it's more basic than that, which is the reason that, in the New International version, this is translated by the word – the word "carnal" is translated by the word "worldly." And from all Paul has said here and will say in the next verses, carnality is immaturity. It is ignorance. It is a failure to grow in the faith which results in bad behavior, like divisions, like party spirit, factions.

What Paul is not describing as a carnal Christian is a person who made a profession of faith, lived as a Christian for a while, then drifted off and reverted to his old way of life. Doesn't go to church, he has no interest in spiritual things, his life is indistinguishable from that of the world. The Corinthians were carnal but they were not like that. They were going to church, they confessed Christ, they were having spiritual experiences. We read about that in chapters 12 through 14 where he deals with spiritual gifts. But you see there that their spiritual exercises or their experiences were very selfish and their use of the gifts was self-oriented.

So there was zeal but it was not zeal according to knowledge and that was the problem. They were not growing according to wisdom and knowledge, and the result was they behaved badly. And Christians do behave badly. They fall into sin, they fall into immorality, they fall into dishonesty. They can even lose their zeal for a time, drift, and live very much like the men of the world. Theologians have seen this. The old Puritan divines who wrote the Westminster Confession of Faith recognized this. They stated that "genuine believers, through the temptations of Satan or the neglect of study and prayer, may, as they put it, fall into grievous sins and for a time continue therein."

These things happen. The Scriptures teach that. Great men of God, from Abraham to David to the apostle Peter, were overcome by weakness. They fell into sin and they continued in sin for a time. But it is for a time, as the Confession states. It's not permanent. Christians can become carnal but that is not a category of Christian that is acceptable to God. And there's nothing in that condition of carnality that offers assurance about salvation. And the Lord doesn't permit one to remain in it. He disciplines His children and His discipline can be severe enough to produce physical death. We will see that in chapter 5 where Paul gives examples of that.

So the notion that a carnal Christian is a person who believed, walked the aisles, signed a card, then lives the rest of his life or her life in complete indifference to the gospel but is assured of heaven is not found in Scripture and that, I should say, is not a life that offers assurance. I can't say that such a person is not saved, but I can say the Scriptures offer no assurance for that kind of life. We can't apply the expression "carnal Christian" to everyone who simply made a profession of faith. There are people who profess faith but who don't genuinely believe, and that's just a fact of Scripture. Paul describes them in Titus 1:16. They profess to know God but their deeds deny Him.

The Corinthians weren't denying Christ. They weren't growing in Christ. They weren't advancing in the knowledge of God. That's carnality. It is immaturity. How many people in the modern Evangelical



church fit that description? How many people today are just not interested in learning the doctrines of the Word of God and growing in that? They're interested in growing in a lot of things. They want to advance in business and all of their endeavors or their hobbies and all of that's fine but they're not interested in advancing in the faith. I don't know how many are like that. I suspect a lot.

Don Carson, who is a professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, has written some things that I've found helpful in my studies in 1 Corinthians, and he has had a lot of exposure to the church, the Evangelical church, and he wrote of these people: "Not for them solid knowledge of scripture, not for them mature theological reflection. They want nothing more than another round of choruses and a simple message, something that won't challenge them to think or to examine their lives, to make choices and to grow in their knowledge and adoration of the living God."

Well, whatever the situation in American Evangelicalism is, that was the situation in Corinth. The church was carnal. It was worldly, which is a condition that involves both thought and conduct. The two go together. Solomon said, "As a man thinks within himself, so he is." And the Corinthians teach us by their example that when Christians don't progress in doctrine, they regress in behavior. He told them that they were walking like mere men, they were behaving like the world, like the pagans, like men without the Holy Spirit.

Then in verse 4, he gives an example of their bad behavior in the factionalism that had divided the church: "For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not mere men?" In other words, "Aren't you behaving like men without the Holy Spirit? And living according to worldly wisdom?" Now, they had the Holy Spirit and they are children of God, but the point of his question and the answer that it expects is yes, you are behaving like mere men, as though there's nothing spiritual about you. Who is Paul or Apollos? That's what Paul is asking. Who are we? Who is Luther or Calvin or John Wesley or any popular preacher today?

Paul's answer is given in verse 5, and he says, "We are just servants of Christ." That's what we are. Now, that word "servant" is interesting. It's the word that translates "deacon," our word for the office of deacon. It's almost a transliteration of that word from Greek, and literally, it means "through dust." It was used originally of a table waiter. It was a man who worked at menial tasks. You'd just see him working in the dust and stirring up dust as he works in a very menial way to serve other people. Well, it came to be used of an office in the church, which is a noble office, but in its original use and its usage here, it was not a glamorous position. It didn't have a nobility about it.

And Paul was saying of himself and Apollos and others, he says, "We're servants, we're waiters." He's stressing here the lowly character of the service that he and others did, and he's making the point that they are not the point, that the Lord is the point. He's everything. We can illustrate this from other things. We can illustrate it, for example, from some of the Lord's parables, and the parable in Luke 14, the parable of the dinner where a man, a great man, a very wealthy man, sends out his slave to the highways and hedges to invite people to come and fill his house. He's giving a great banquet and he invites people from all over to come and enjoy it. Well, the story doesn't glorify the slave. He's just a messenger.

People don't come to the banquet and say, "I owe you so much" to the slave. It's not about him. It's about the generosity of the rich man who provided it all. And Paul is saying here that he and Apollos are just messengers. They just go out with the invitation. Now, he says they were "servants through whom you believed." That's important. Paul wasn't denigrating the position as God's servant. Wasn't saying it's not important, it is important, it's very significant. God uses men, God uses women, He uses people to give the gospel and establish the church and build it up through the teaching of the Word of God and the example of our lives.

Paul speaks of this in other places. In Ephesians 4:11-16, he speaks there about the gifts and how they're used and all. That's very

important. In fact, there is no greater task given to anyone in all of the world than the task that's been given to you and to me as Christians to be witnesses of Christ and to give the gospel and establish the church and build it up. That's a work of eternal value. Doesn't demean other tasks that we have in the world, but the point I'm making is this is an important thing, and Paul's not denigrating that, but he explains that the Corinthians believe through their ministry as the Lord gave opportunity to each one, meaning as God gave Paul and Apollos opportunity, they gave the gospel.

In other words, their work – and for that matter, the Corinthians' faith, their response to the work of Paul and Apollos, was ultimately the Lord's doing. It's the Lord who gave the opportunity. If the Lord hadn't given the opportunity, there wouldn't have been any response, there wouldn't have been any work, there wouldn't have been any fruit. Again, the Lord is the one who is to be honored, not men. He develops that point in the next verses, first with an illustration from farming and then with an illustration from building. In verse 6, he says: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth."

So Paul compares the Corinthians or he compares Corinth to a farm, and just as on a large farm, there are lots of laborers who have different tasks. So too in the church there are lots of ministries and ministers. But for all the work a farmer does, he does not make the corn grow. God does that. How it happens is unknown. There's a mystery in that. A seed falls to the ground, it dies, and a plant grows. Life comes out of death. A grain becomes wheat. Men can't take credit for that. Only God produces the principle of life. Only He gives life and gives growth. And what is true in the field is true in the church. God gives life and growth to people and He gives success in the ministry. It's all of God. Salvation is of the Lord.

The Corinthians were obsessed with personalities, with field hands, waiters, so to speak. Nothing wrong with field hands, nothing wrong with waiters, that's all honorable, but they were missing the point. They were missing the real object of adoration, which is the Lord God.

He gives life. Paul and Apollos didn't. They really were just instruments in God's hands. In fact, Paul says in verse 7 that he and the others were really nothing. Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth."

Now, we can illustrate Paul's point from our own experiences with technology, and I'm probably the last person that should try to give an illustration about life from a computer, but we all are familiar with that to some extent. A computer is a tool, it's a great tool, but it's just a tool. It doesn't think, it doesn't act on its own – mine seems to at times but they don't. And if it's not plugged in, it won't work. And if it is plugged in and turned on, it still won't function if the operator, the one who's using it, isn't working it. Well, Paul was God's instrument. He was appointed to be an apostle by God.

The Lord gave him and Apollos and every minister of that age opportunity, he says in verse 5. Paul was called and gifted by God, empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. Apart from the work of the Spirit, apart from the triune God, he's nothing. Now, let me make a word of qualification. Paul is not like a computer, which is an inanimate object. He's not like an instrument, which is inanimate. He's an agent. We're agents. We have moral, spiritual, intellectual abilities and we are accountable, responsible, for the use of those. But apart from the work of God in him and in us, he – we are nothing. We don't function.

So why would anyone elevate Paul or Apollos or any minister of the gospel to such a high status as though they were the cause of a person's salvation or spiritual growth? But people do that. They did that then, they do that now. They attach themselves to a personality who is really in the true analysis of things just a mere man. John Calvin recognized that. He recognized the danger of what we're speaking of here in his day. He was in his time the preeminent Christian leader in Europe in the middle of the 16th century. He had a widespread influence. No one had an influence – no one even in the political sphere had the influence that John Calvin had in all of Europe, and his influence is felt to this day.

But he didn't want to draw attention to himself or want his grave to become a place of pilgrimages, and he lived in a time when there were lots of pilgrimages, lots of that kind of thing going on, and so he instructed that at his death he be buried in a common cemetery without a tombstone and he was. A few months later when some students came to do just what he didn't want done, to visit his grave, no one could find it. And it's unknown to this day. Well, that's the attitude of the apostle Paul. "We're just men." That's what he's telling the Corinthians. He's saying, "We're not to be venerated as something more than that. We're simply men."

Now, I don't think Paul meant that we're not to appreciate what our teachers have done for us. He wasn't suggesting that he and others were absolutely nothing. They weren't, just as I said, instruments. They are servants. That's how he has described himself. They belong to God and they're used by God. That's important, and what they did was important, and it counted, and we value what those men have done in our lives. I do. I look back on my life and I can see how men were influential in my life in some ways – probably in ways I'm not even aware of, but growing up in a home where I was taught the Bible, where I listened to teachers on the radio, I can remember as a child growing up, the first thing we did on a Sunday morning was listen to Donald Grey Barnhouse on the radio.

And then I came to this place and sat under the ministry of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson and had him as a professor at seminary and others as well. You appreciate that, you're glad of that. That counts for something. So Paul is not suggesting that we're absolutely nothing and that there's no reason to appreciate what someone has done. That's not the point. But the point is that what we have, what we do, really doesn't go to the man or the woman; it goes to the Lord Himself. He is the one. It's all about Him. And he makes that point. He makes the point here but he also makes the point that what we do is important. In verse 8, he speaks of that. He says all of us are one. Now, what he means by that is we're all united.

We who minister, we are all united in God's work, and that work is significant. It has a great return. Paul says each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. The standard for reward is not what we often think it is. It's not the amount of gifts that a person has. Those are given sovereignly. We'll see that later when we come to the section in chapters 12 through 14 on spiritual gifts. It's all of God. He's the one that, by His Will, determines who has what gift. So we can't take credit for that. We didn't invent our gifts, they're gifts, they're given to us. And it's not the success of the labor. God gives the opportunities, as he said.

The reward that comes is based on faithfulness with what one has so that those who labor in obscurity and don't get the applause of men and have what perhaps appears to be very little fruit may have greater reward than those who were made agents of great results. God's rewards will be based on faithfulness with what we have. Charles Hodge said "on self-denial." It's really the same thing. Putting others first, putting God before us, His interests before our own. That's what God blesses and that's what pleases Him. But even so, having said all that, it is all God's doing. And that's what Paul says in verse 9. "For we are God's fellow workers," meaning not workers with God but workers with one another who belong to God.

That's both the reason a person ministers and the reason he or she will be rewarded. It is all of God. And when we join parties and favor an Apollos over a Paul, we not only do harm to the gospel and do harm to the church, we deny ourselves blessings. We deny ourselves the blessings of those men that God has raised up for us. They're all gifts to the church. It's not an either/or. It's all are for them. Well, doing that, though, joining in parties or factions, Paul says that's carnal. That is a fleshly, worldly attitude. It frustrates spiritual growth in the church, in the individual, but it's really the result of not growing. It's the really the result of being stunted in one's growth.

Really, if we are not advancing, we are regressing. We're not a wash; we're a loss. We all need to be learning the truth of God. We

need to be studying His Word. We need to be deepening our understanding of the doctrines of Scripture. That's what we need to be doing. And so the question we have to ask ourselves is: Is that what we are doing? Is that our desire? How much time do we spend reading our Bibles? How much time do we spend praying? How much time do we spend reading literature that can help us advance in the faith? We can have great teachers on our bookshelf and have access to them in that way.

How much time do we spend watching television or reading the sports page? I don't like to labor on those kinds of things because there's nothing wrong with that. In and of itself, those can be pleasant diversions and they can be a time of rest and that's fine and there's nothing wrong with knowing about what's going on in sports and politics and all of that, but it's really a question of priority, and that's what we need to look at in our own lives and ask ourselves: What is really important? What has the prominence in our lives? What are we spending most of our time doing? And if we're not learning, if we're not studying God's Word, if we're not doing that, then we're not growing.

And if you're not growing, then you're shrinking, you're carnal, and that is a deadly condition. It leads to trouble. At worst, you will become a troublemaker in the church; at best, you'll be of little value to the church. You will be a weak, feckless Christian. And when trials come – and trials in life will come to all of us. When those trials come, you will not hold up under them. Corinth was carnal. As a result, we have two books in the New Testament, long books, that deal with all of their problems, their arrogance and stupidity. You don't want that. You don't want to be like these Corinthians. What we want is to be spiritually healthy in life. We want a life that's full and meaningful, a prosperous life, one that pleases God and obtains rich rewards from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

That's what we want and that's what we can have only through a faithful life. A life of growing in the knowledge of God, of seeing His glory and His goodness in the Word of God and through that being

stirred up, motivated to live a life that pleases Him. Doing that out of a sense of gratitude for all that He's done for us, and when we do that, when we begin to live like that, then we'll be not only a blessing to ourselves but a blessing to others, and we'll bring honor and glory to Him. That's what we should be doing. May God give us the grace and the desire to do that, to live that, because ultimately that comes from Him, and we must look to Him for that.

But if you're here without Him, if you don't know the Lord God, then our prayer, our desire, is that He will bring you to Himself. He does that by bringing you to Christ, His eternal Son. And we come to Him through faith and faith alone, not by doing great works, not by pilgrimages, not by anything other than simply receiving Him as our Savior. He is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and the Savior of men, and through faith alone we have everything that He's done for us. We have salvation, we have eternal life, we become His children, through faith. We have eternal life, which can never be taken from us. May God give you the grace to look to Him and believe and then to live a life of service and growth. I pray that for all of us. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do ask for that. We are reminded here of a basic problem in the Corinthian church. They were carnal, they were fleshly, they were worldly. They were not growing and as a result, there were all kinds of problems that occasioned this letter and occasioned a second letter that we read after this. When we don't grow, difficulties arise. Help us to see the need of growing spiritually, of feeding on your Word and being diligent in all of the means of grace that you've given to us, prayer and fellowship and service. Father, bless us. Ultimately it's you that gives us the very desire for these things, so we pray for that and pray that we'll live lives that please you. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.