

Because of the Gospel

SPEAKER	Matt Ryniker
DATE	Sunday, July 23, 2023
PASSAGES	1 Corinthians 16; 1 Corinthians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 11:32; 1 Corinthians 12:13
MESSAGE	Begins at 0:00:00 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Paul spends an entire letter correcting a church, and not one word of it is aimed at earning anything. His instructions never build toward union with Christ — they fall out of a union already given by grace. Christianity is not a club of people encouraging each other to do better, and the practical last chapter of 1 Corinthians only makes sense with the finished work of Jesus underneath it.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ “Come on, do better” is the rally cry of dead religion. It works like a drug: a hit of pride, a sense of dignity through superiority, and a new dose needed next week.
- ◆ Paul’s answer to division is not that the church hammer out its differences. It is that Christ is not divided and they are all in him.
- ◆ Sanctification is mostly a person, not a process. Christ “became to us ... righteousness and sanctification” — he is our holiness by his own blood and life.
- ◆ Freedom in Christ is not a license to sweeten poison. Matt’s reading of Paul’s hardest line: if someone insists on self-destruction, refuse to make it taste good.
- ◆ The prize people chase their whole lives — union with God — is handed over free, before the race starts. The final boss is already beaten.
- ◆ For the Christian, the judge and the defense attorney are in cahoots. Discipline is not how God gets to the point of loving you; it is what his love does.

- ◆ Small groups, giving, the way a father speaks to his children — none of it is a condition of being loved. It is the gospel preached with your life.

► 1:00:08

This message closes out fifteen to twenty weeks in 1 Corinthians, and Matt admitted he had not planned to read the last chapter at all. Someone he loves dearly talked him out of skipping it — “then we won’t feel closure” — so the church read the whole thing, chapter 16 included, the most stubbornly practical page in the letter.

How to read a letter

► 1:00:43

His standing advice on reading the Bible is to notice what kind of literature is in front of you and read it accordingly. This is a letter, written to be read aloud in church from beginning to end. Matt confessed that Bible facts never stuck for him — he did not grow up in a memorization club — until one night when Mandy was working a night shift and the kids were asleep, and he read Galatians out loud to himself in the living room. It did more for him than six or seven silent readings. A Hope small group ran on that principle for a while: whole books, out loud, the way they were meant to be heard.

1. Not so that — because

► 1:03:08

Matt is eager to say that Christianity is not about being a good person, and puzzled about how the faith acquired that reputation — “as if we are united by our common effort to be better.” The core is the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done: by grace, an effortless union with God that sounds too good to be true.

► 1:04:18

Which raises the obvious problem with a letter full of correction. Look closely at Paul’s motive, Matt argued, and it is never *so as to find* the gospel but *because of* the gospel. Take the very first issue, the factions: “It’s not so that we can have unity with Christ. It’s because we have unity with Christ, and because he is not divided, that we can have unity.” The alternative is the oldest religion there is. “Come on, man, do better — that is the rally cry of dead religion.”

► 1:05:49

And he was honest about why that bait works. Shame, fear and insecurity are common human weather, and “at least better than average” is a real relief for about a week. Pride behaves like a drug — a shot of

adrenaline, a sense of calm, a borrowed dignity that comes from superiority and from belonging to a club of elite betterers. Then you need another hit.

2. The highlight reel

► 1:07:54

Before finishing, Matt ran back through the letter to show the same move made over and over. Chloe's people report quarreling (1 [Corinthians 1:11](#)), and the solution is not a retreat where everyone holds hands; it is a question — "[Is Christ divided?](#)" That is gospel-powered, not man-powered. When the church is embarrassed about its lack of worldly wisdom (1 [Corinthians 1:25–26](#)), the answer is not "read some scrolls, master the philosophy of the age better than they do."

"And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:30 ↗

► 1:10:08

Matt lingered on that third word. "Did you know that sanctification is mostly a person, not a process?" It means holy-ification, and Christ is ours — not the slow accumulation of earlier mornings and longer readings. Growth in godly behavior is good. It is not what makes anyone holy.

3. Freedom, and the poison you do not sweeten

► 1:11:19

The Corinthians had a slogan: *all things are lawful for me*. Paul answers it twice — not all things are helpful, and "I will not be dominated by anything" (1 [Corinthians 6:12](#)). Notice how practical he is willing to get once the foundation holds: it may not be illegal for you, but is it any use to you?

► 1:12:23

That is also how Matt read Paul's hardest instruction — do not even share a meal with a professing brother living in immorality. The door to union with Christ stands wide open through his sacrifice. If someone would rather drink the poison of the age, "the proper response is no, I don't want to make that easy on you. If you want to destroy yourself, that's tragically your choice, but I'm not going to make that fun for you."

4. The prize is already given

► 1:13:56

His picture for it came from an old video game. Beat the final boss and you can go back and replay the earlier levels — you already won; the coins are no longer the point. “The whole operation is not resting on your shoulders, but you can spend yourself even to the point of death in your faithfulness to him as an act of worship.”

“But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:17 ↗

This, Matt said, is the thing people spend whole lives reaching for by moralistic effort, and it was given away free before any of us were born. Not a palace of luxury, whatever we imagine heaven to be — union with the bridegroom himself, who is already at the door knocking.

5. The judge and the defense attorney are in cahoots

► 1:15:35

At the Lord’s table the Corinthians were eating selfishly — one goes hungry, another gets drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21–22). Paul refuses to commend them, and then explains what is actually happening to them:

“But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:32 ↗

► 1:16:48

Matt’s image: in a small town you might find the judge is the literal father of your defense attorney. Here it is Father and Son. “This is collusion in your favor.” Discipline is not how God gets to a point where he loves you; it is what his love does, and it beats the alternative of being abandoned to figure life out alone. “Being disciplined by the Lord is far better than being affirmed by the world. If you’ve tasted both of these deeply, you can testify.”

► 1:17:47

The gifts of the Spirit work the same way. Their purpose is that “there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25). Not a program for getting God’s attention — enough prophecies and he might notice you — but the overflow of something already true:

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13 ↗

6. Chapter 16, which is nothing but practicals

► 1:19:22

The collection is not for the Corinthians’ own church and not for Paul; it is relief for Christians in Jerusalem living hand to mouth. Set something aside on the first day of every week, “as he may prosper” — no percentage named, just proportion, and stored up so there is no scramble when Paul arrives (1 Corinthians 16:1–4). They accredit their own couriers by letter, so that people they trust can say they saw the gift arrive. Above reproach, financially, in public.

► 1:21:41

Paul will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, “for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:5–9). Matt noticed what he does with the opposition: mentions it, asks nobody to make it stop, and goes anyway.

► 1:22:45

Then Timothy, and this was Matt’s favorite aside in the chapter. This church has been harsh with Paul, and Timothy is a man who gets nervous. So Paul says it three times in two verses: put him at ease among you; let no one despise him; help him on his way in peace (1 Corinthians 16:10–11). Care for a fellow worker, written into the itinerary. Apollos, by contrast, is free to decline — Paul urged him strongly and he simply was not willing to come yet (1 Corinthians 16:12).

► 1:24:43

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13–14 ↗

► 1:25:47

The household of Stephanas gets commended for devoting itself to the service of the saints, and the room is told to be subject to such people (1 Corinthians 16:15–18). Greet one another with a holy kiss — “we’re still working on holy hugs, and that’s fine. Holy fist bumps are just fine.” Even the closing curse on anyone with no love for the Lord is not Paul cheering for anyone’s ruin (1 Corinthians 16:21–24). “If you want death, you can eat it, but we’re not going to stand in your way and make it taste real good before you get there. What we really want is for you to taste and see that he is good.”

7. So why bother with any of it

► 1:28:08

Matt started deliberately low. Nothing in Scripture requires a church to have plumbing or air conditioning — “but I mean, it sure is nice. I got at least one amen.” Firm foundation first, then you are free to care about things that practically serve people.

► 1:29:39

A harder example: the head coverings of 1 Corinthians 11:3. Hope does not ask anyone to wear a veil, because the cultural signal is gone — but the shape Paul was protecting is not. Husband to wife as Christ to the church is a play acted out at home, because “with our very lives we want to illustrate the gospel.”

► 1:30:46

Then the one he clearly cared about most. Treating his children with dignity and gentleness is not why he is forgiven. He does it because small children superimpose God onto their earthly father, and this is his feeblest attempt to point at the truth: your dad loves you, your mom and dad love each other, God your Father disciplines you in love for your good, and you are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. “None of that’s legalistic. It’s not a condition for God to love us.”

► 1:32:55

Same logic for small groups, and he said plainly that Hope Chapel needs several more. Skipping one does not unmake anyone’s salvation; the cost is everything you miss — the life, nourishment, comfort and encouragement that only move through a body. And there is no franchise rulebook. Meet at your workplace. Meet Friday mornings if that is when you are free. Start it with the one friend you have here. Ask someone to come alongside you. Ask for help choosing what to study.

The question he left

► 1:36:45

“Since the gospel is true and I have this blissful, joyful union with Christ available to me, what is a way I can obey — not so that he’ll love me, but because he loves me? What is a thing I can do to serve him and his body, not so as to be forgiven, but because I am walking in freedom and in newness of life?” He would not answer it for anyone: you know your life, the needs around you, the person who is lonely, who you could invite into your home. And if you genuinely do not know, ask the Holy Spirit to put it on your mind this week.

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- [1 Corinthians](#)
- [Galatians](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:11](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:13](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:25–26](#)
- [1 Corinthians 1:30](#)
- [1 Corinthians 6:12](#)
- [1 Corinthians 6:17](#)
- [1 Corinthians 11:21–22](#)
- [1 Corinthians 11:32](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:25](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:1–4](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:5–9](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:10–11](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:12](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:13–14](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:15–18](#)
- [1 Corinthians 16:21–24](#)
- [1 Corinthians 11:3](#)
- [Revelation 19:9](#)

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where have you caught yourself living as though obedience were the entrance fee rather than the overflow? What did that feel like from the inside?
2. Matt described pride as a drug that wears off in about a week. When do you reach for “at least better than average,” and what is it covering?
3. If sanctification is mostly a person and not a process, what changes about how you think about your own slow spots?
4. Paul wrote three separate lines making sure Timothy would be treated well. Who in this group needs someone to go ahead of them like that right now?
5. Matt’s closing question was simple: what is one way you can obey Jesus this week — not so he will love you, but because he does? Name it out loud before you leave.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Matt Ryniker is Hope Chapel's senior pastor — his own description of the job — and reports to the church's governing board, who he cheerfully calls his boss. He and his wife Mandy have been held up from Hope's own pulpit as an example to the congregation. He spent a stretch of his working life as a public school teacher, and he still teaches the parent dedication classes where families commit to raising their children to follow Jesus — a theme that runs straight into this message.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqpWyuzAI2k&t=0s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.