



# YOU ARE GOD'S MESS

*9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. - 1 Cor 1:8*

In a world quick to point out flaws and demand perfection, the Apostle Paul offers a different starting point for transformation. When addressing the deeply flawed Corinthian church—a community riddled with division, immorality, and spiritual immaturity—he didn't begin with a harsh rebuke. Instead, Paul first anchored them in their unshakeable identity: "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2 NKJV). This act of grace reminds us that before any correction, before any call to change, there is a foundational truth: if you are in Christ, you are already set apart, already called, already God's. This definitive sanctification, a past-tense work of God, precedes and empowers our ongoing journey of becoming more like Him. Just as Paul extended this grace, we are called to first root ourselves and others in this secure identity, fostering an environment where growth is motivated by love and belonging, not by shame or striving.

This pattern of grace before correction holds power for our own lives and our interactions with fellow believers. We, like the Corinthians, are often "a mess"—we fall short, struggle with sin, and sometimes look more like the world than like Christ. Yet, God's faithfulness remains our anchor. He who called us into fellowship with His Son will also "sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:8 NKJV). Understanding that our ultimate standing before God is secured by Christ's finished work, not our fluctuating performance, frees us to extend radical grace to ourselves and to others. When we see a brother or sister stumble, or when we face our own failures, let us first remember their (and our) identity "in Christ" – God's beloved, chosen, and sanctified. This perspective shifts us from a place of competition or condemnation to one of unity, empathy, and patient encouragement, knowing that God is faithfully at work in every one of His "messy" but cherished children.

## Study Questions:

1. How did the Corinthian church's problems demonstrate a failure to "look more like Christ than like Corinth"? Where do we look more like the world than we should? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 6:15-20; 10:31-33)
2. Given the conduct we see in Corinth, why might Paul's opening salutation (1 Corinthians 1:1-3) be surprising to us? How can we learn to have more grace, building people up in their identity in Christ, before going to guns?
3. What is the significance of Paul calling the Corinthians "the church of God that is in Corinth" rather than "the church of Corinth that is in God"? (1 Corinthians 1:2; John 15:19)
4. Explain the distinction between "definitive sanctification" and "progressive sanctification." Why is understanding this difference crucial for a believer's identity? (1 Corinthians 1:2; Philipians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3)
5. What does "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 1:9) mean in the context of our salvation and perseverance? How does 2 Timothy 2:13 support this?