

**Sermon Notes:** January 18, 2026

[Lectionary Readings](#)

**Focus:** Called Corinthians

Paul begins his letter to the Corinthian church by naming identity before addressing behavior. He grounds everything in God's faithfulness. Corinth was not spiritually healthy, but it was wealthy. Their influence and resources gave them room to forget how they had been called and how God's faithfulness was calling them back to the basics. They lost themselves in the culture game.

They may have been worn down by their own version of relentless news cycles, moral certainty, and unquestioned loyalty to empire. I know I am worn down by those forces and often feel exhausted and alienated by our cultural moment. Corinthian Christians lived inside a polarized world where status, patronage, loyalty, and honor were the only currencies that mattered. That world sounds uncomfortably around us.

When Paul writes that the Corinthians were "called by God," he is doing something more challenging than comforting. Today, it matters to remember that we are not first voters, consumers, or activists. Paul affirms talent and spiritual giftedness but refuses to let them become the core of Christian identity. Some say Paul was a poor preacher. Maybe he was. He once preached long enough that a young man fell asleep and died but he also caused a riot with his rhetorical skill. Paul was unshakable in this: he was better at holding on to his calling by God than at crafting impressive words about God.

**Today**, we cannot outthink our way out of this stressful moment in the world. Information can't save us. We cannot educate the opposition into adopting our enlightened view. Knowledge that leads to love is superior to information echo chambers as pathway to division. News, social media, and politics often feel total because they demand that everything be decided right now.

Outrage – now

Despair – now

Triumph - now

Paul insists that the final word belongs to God's faithfulness. That faithfulness is not experienced in the heat of the moment but across the long arc of following Jesus. This constant demand for immediacy is often a deceptive distraction. You are not responsible for holding the world together. You are responsible for hearing God's call and then going where God points.

Faithfulness does not mean disengagement, but it does mean you are finally allowed to breathe the Spirit. That breath clarifies the road ahead. The opposite impulse insists that every crisis demands total alignment right now. Paul instead names a center in Jesus that can bear the weight of our lives.

**But I am not confused!** I do not think you are either. What wears us down is not uncertainty about belief, but the exhaustion of living in a world where every moment demands outrage or a cynical shrug. Paul reminds us that this exhaustion has an antidote. Before we are claimed by any cause, fear, or hope for this country, we are already claimed by a faithful God.

## **Deeper look at the lectionary text**

***In Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus*** Paul names the foundation before he names the fractures, because only a faithful God can hold a church together.

**Called to be saints** carries a note of irony. Paul is not congratulating them. He is reminding them who they already are and therefore what their divisions contradict. The Corinthians are κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, called saints, despite the moral and theological chaos they are actively creating. Paul will address that chaos later, and there is no need to rehearse it all here.

**with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus**

**Christ** Corinth's problems are not merely local quirks. Paul understands that anyone who calls on the name of Jesus enters a shared life shaped by the God who has already called them first. Grace precedes correction. Paul gives thanks before he confronts them. God's generosity is named before human failure, not to excuse it, but to ground repentance.

**for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and**

**knowledge of every kind** λόγος and γνῶσις, speech and knowledge, are precisely the gifts that will later fuel factionalism. This is not accidental. Paul reframes their prized abilities as received, not achieved. The gifts that build us up are often the same gifts that undo us when they are detached from humility.

**you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.** Charisma is not the same thing as character. Paul never equates giftedness with faithfulness, though many churches still do. The Corinthians are gifted, yes, and those gifts are from God. If you find a way to put together – congratulations – sanctification. That's for another day though.

**as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ** Paul grounds identity in the future rather than present status. Eschatological hope disrupts Corinth's obsession with winning now. The future of Christ exposes the smallness of present prestige. Hope sustains deliberate patient working to reveal love in the the world.

**He will strengthen you to the end.** *Blamelessness* is God's work, not the Corinthians'. This counters moralism. Paul does not say, "Behave better so you will be blameless," but "God will hold you fast." This is accountability without despair.

**God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God's faithfulness is the theological center of the letter, and verse 9 functions as its hinge. God's constancy exposes human inconsistency without annihilating hope. Fellowship here is covenantal, not sentimental. κοινωνία is not vague togetherness. It names shared allegiance, shared loyalty, and participation in Christ's life and

suffering. Paul is not advocating niceness. He expects fidelity to Christ to reshape the entire social life of the church.

**Todd**