



***Theme: Power Made Perfect in Weakness – The Life of Paul
“Made for a Purpose”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, November 8-9, 2025, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verses:

¹⁷ This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.” – Romans 1:17

VIDEO Sermon Starter

SLIDE “Made for a Purpose”

Have you ever found something and wondered what it was or what its purpose could possibly be? I was going through my garage as part of my sorting through things in the fall and I found several things that I had no idea what they did or what they were for.

GRAPHIC Air Fryer Table

I found this doohickey, ma bobber and it was my daughter who told me that it was the air fryer table that went to her microwave, but she never used it. I found many cords and cables and other things that no longer seem to have items that went with them. Then I finally decided to go to the thrift shop and Barry, who is one of our church members who works there, after telling him I was looking for something unusual that

took a while to figure out its purpose, led me directly to this item.

GRAPHIC Cooler Portable Air Conditioner for Car

GRAPHIC Inside of Cooler

After I show you what this is I'm sure that one of you will want to buy it. It's priced at \$40 at the thrift shop but I will sell it to you for \$39.99! Any of you want to guess what this is? This is a rolling cooler which has been retrofitted with tubing and a fan to turn it into a traveling air conditioning unit that you plug into your car or van or motorhome I would guess. When you open the lid, you can see the pump inside and you realize that you fill this with water and ice and then when you turn on the fan it circulates the water through this unit on top and then it puts out cool air. I was thinking we might be able to use this in the summers here in our sanctuary since we don't have reconditioning, at least for the people up here preaching or singing.

What I'm sure of is that most of us would have no clue what this thing is just by looking at it on the outside and it takes someone with a bit of creativity and imagination and thoughtfulness to be able to figure out what the purpose of this item might be. I would suggest that many of us struggle when we look in the mirror to figure out what our purpose might be and one of the beautiful things about the apostle Paul is that he himself took a while to figure out his purpose.

SLIDE Do you know your purpose?

SLIDE We were made by God to be loved by God.

We often say out loud this truth here at Summit Church because the scriptures begin with this idea in the story of creation in Genesis. God created humanity to be in a covenant relationship. God created us for companionship and relationship with him and with each other. Our problem is that this gets lost because of our human condition where we sin, meaning that we fall short and we do things that separate us from God and from each other and from ourselves. The apostle Paul will talk

about this often because those in the early church struggled with a purpose that was bigger than what the Greco-Roman world told them about themselves.

We struggle with this today because it is our human condition. We often allow the world to define us by how much money we make or our grades we get or how successful we might be. This is why the apostle Paul lays out for us from the very beginning a truth that every single one of us who follow Jesus needs to hold in our heart. It is why this is a scripture memory verse for this week and one I hope you will memorize and carry with you. It comes from the first letter to Paul that we have in our scriptures, and it is a letter that contains the core of the Christian faith in many ways. Paul says this in Romans 1. If you're willing, would you say it together with me out loud?

BIBLE

17 This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." – Romans 1:17

We find our purpose through faith and not through anything that we do or don't do. Today we continue in a series of sermons where we are focusing on the apostle Paul picking up where we left off last week, which was at his conversion. In that moment of conversion, he went from being Saul who persecuted followers of Jesus, to the great apostle who would start churches throughout their Greco-Roman world.

It was All Saints weekend, and we remembered last week that Paul is in many ways a saint. There is no human being aside from Jesus and his parents Mary and Joseph who have had a greater impact on the Christian faith than the apostle Paul. He was the principal thinker in the early church who helped people understand what it meant to follow Jesus. Paul is the one who heard the call from Christ to take the gospel from a small and little-known sect in Judaism in Jerusalem out to the

Greco-Roman world where it then could penetrate the rest of the globe. He starts churches in cities throughout Greece and Turkey which then could move into Europe and Asia minor, eventually crossing the Mediterranean Sea into Africa. It is Paul who helped Christianity become the faith tradition it is today which connects with **31% of the world's population**.

About **half of your New Testament, 13 of the 27 books**, are written by Paul in the form of letters that were written to those early churches, or to the leaders of those churches. His words have been translated and read by more people throughout **the world than any other author**. They not only have changed **western civilization**, but they have transformed **billions of lives** over the last two centuries. Paul's letters are the earliest Christian documents we have and so they shaped the early church and those communities who eventually developed the gospels and the stories of Jesus.

One of the main things that Paul struggled with in his life is also what he taught and preached about to others, which was claiming our purpose as followers of Jesus. We were made for something more. Paul discovered this truth in his own life, and he wanted others to understand what it meant to not only follow Jesus but to be saved by his grace and by faith in him as our Lord and Savior and Messiah. Paul would travel on three missionary journeys from AD 48 until AD 57 to share this message and to live out his purpose. Some argue he took a fourth missionary journey when he was taken back to Rome to stand before Caesar and placed in prison before his death. During those nine years, Paul will travel 10,000 miles to fulfill his purpose, bringing this Good News that we find our purpose first by discovering we were made by God to be loved by God, putting our faith and trust in Jesus, something bigger than ourselves.

Paul was converted to this faith at the age of 21 we learned last week. He then would travel to the Roman province of Arabia which includes most of modern-day Jordan and the Sinai Peninsula which is

part of Egypt today. He may have gone to Mount Sinai where Moses received the law and the 10 commandments. Elijah went to the same region to listen for the still, small voice of God. Moses also experienced the burning Bush in this region and it's a good guess that Paul knew these things and went there himself to get clarity on his purpose and what it is God wanted him to do. Paul was a great student of the law of Moses, and my guess is he is trying to figure out what that means in the light of Jesus in his conversion.

The scriptures tell us that he took three years. After those three years he is 24 years old, and he heads back to Jerusalem. He tries to share his story but there are still many who are afraid of him even though he has been off grid for three years. One of the new disciples in Jerusalem is Barnabas who believes in Saul and encourages him as he has now become Paul. After about a year in Jerusalem, there are some that want to kill him, so Paul gets on a ship and is sent back to his hometown of tarsus. He will spend the next 11 to 14 years depending on how we read Galatians 2:1 in his hometown probably living with his parents and working with them making tents. Those of us who have had to go home and live with our parents as adults should take solace in the fact that Paul did this for over a decade!

SLIDE Living into our purpose often takes time and faithfulness.

We don't know much about the apostle Paul during this time and it's not until he's somewhere close to 39 years old that his story picks up again. There is an important life and leadership lesson in this story because it reminds us that we sometimes must wait in life before we get to achieve our purpose and our passion. Abraham and Sarah are in their 70s or 80s when God shows them their purpose of bringing about a great nation. Joseph of the amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat has dreams as a young man of what God is going to do in his life, but he first must live through being betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, living in a prison, before he becomes the leader of Egypt later in life.

Moses and Mirriam wait 40 years between the time Moses sees the burning bush until he leads the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, and towards the Promised Land. David is told as a young boy that he will one day be king, but it takes two decades of preparation and waiting and difficulty before he fulfills that purpose of bleeding the people of Israel. Jesus lived for three decades in relative obscurity after his miraculous birth before the beginning of his public ministry.

I'm not sure about each person's story but my guess is that all of us have had time between when we discovered our purpose and when it felt like we really were living into it. It's one thing to know that we were made by God to be loved by God and it's another thing to then begin doing whatever it is God wants us to do. What I found is that it is often in those moments that God is preparing us during the difficult times even for something greater that's coming down the road, if we are willing to wait with God and to sit in that relationship with God during the quiet moments. We unfortunately live in a time where we are used to microwave and quick fixes and get rich quick schemes, but life with God is about crock pot moments that become better over time.

The GMA Dove Music Awards were two weeks ago and one of the songs from that night included the performer Jelly Roll who won best new artist at the Country Music Awards a couple years ago. Is crossed over from country to hip hop to R&B to contemporary Christian and his story it's not unlike the apostle Paul as his conversion and then music career didn't begin until his late 30s. His best-selling album is *Whitsitt Chapel* which is the place where he experienced Jesus as a young man. Jelly Roll was in prison when he was 14 years old and he spent many years in and out of jail. He finds out he has a daughter and when he gets out of jail, he finishes his GED and decides to pursue his dream of being a singer. He continues to visit people in jail and has started ministries that focus on addiction and recovery. One of his most popular songs is, "Son of a Sinner," and the music video depicts a wide variety of people sitting at a bar and confessing their broken places and addictions.

I thought you would appreciate seeing this part in the top Christian song, “Hard Fought Hallelujah,” and part of his acceptance speech for best new artist which turned into a sermon.

VIDEO Jelly Roll

I loved his call for us to stop looking in the rearview mirror and instead look through the windshield because that's what the apostle Paul had to do in his life. Just before Jelly Roll went into his sermon, he thanked God and his wife and numerous other people who had encouraged him along the way and that also reminded me of the apostle Paul who had Barnabas in his life to be his encourager. We read in the book of acts that without Barnabas the apostle Paul would never have been accepted by the apostles in Jerusalem. Barnabas is the one who stood up for Paul and who allowed him to live into his purpose. He put Paul on a ship to go back to tarsus so he could be safe when people wanted to kill him.

GRAPHIC Map of Barnabas and Paul

Barnabas is sent to Antioch up north of Jerusalem to minister to gentile Christians and he remembers Paul and brings him down to Antioch because he knows that Paul has a gift of preaching and teaching. This map will show you how Barnabas goes to Antioch and then he heads up to Paul who is in Tarsus to bring him back to Antioch. Barnabas gives Paul his first job and he pours into him at a time when Paul is trying to discern what his purpose is going to be and how it is that God is now going to use him since he has given his life to following Jesus and accepted the gift of grace by faith alone.

When we read about Barnabas and Saul in the first missionary journey in the book of Acts, we always see that the name of Barnabas is first because he is the mentor and the one encouraging Saul who is the mentee. Saul would never have become the Apostle Paul that we know if it were not for Barnabas. We learned last week that Paul needed a man named Ananias to take a risk and come and lay hands on and encourage

Saul who would become Paul, and this week we remember that Paul still needed others, people like Barnabas, to encourage him. We don't read much about Barnabas after this moment in time but without him Paul may not have written those 13 letters. Here's another important leadership and life and faith lesson from the apostle Paul.

SLIDE We all need a Barnabas (fly in)

We all must be a Barnabas

Part of our purpose is to look around and see who needs encouragement in our lives, and as we did last week remember those who have been encouragers in our life when it comes to our faith. What I've learned is that almost every day we have someone who comes across our path who needs encouragement. God often places those people in our paths, and we are called to pay attention. I think about my pastor growing up that I shared with you a few weeks ago, Gil Viera. I'm so grateful for him and I hope that as I get older, I take advantage of the opportunities to be an encourager for other younger pastors and people in my life.

While they are in Antioch, something very important happens to Saul and Barnabas and it happens in the context of worship in Acts 13.

BIBLE

² One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them." ³ So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

One of the main reasons we gather to sing and pray and read the scriptures is to remember our purpose. It's easy to forget in the world around us our purpose until we gather with each other to encourage each other and to sing songs like you heard Jelly Roll sing and to remember that God made us to love us so that we might go out and share that good news with the world. I know that when I go somewhere else

to worship, I find that God speaks to me something that I just needed to hear that day. Sometimes I hear it in the music. I often we'll listen to a piece of music again later in the day or in the week because something about it was a gift to me in worship.

GRAPHIC Paul's First Missionary Journey Map

That time in worship leads them to the first missionary journey which goes from Antioch to the seaport of Seleucia. From there they take a ship across to the island of Cyprus where they land in Salamis, then walking across the island to Paphos. They then board a ship to Perga which is in modern day Turkey, head to Pisidian Antioch, then Iconium, then Lystra, and finally Derbe. They then backtrack to Perga and take a ship directly back to Antioch. This journey took approximately two years. You might notice the names of some of these cities as they are later known as the 7 churches in the book of Revelation written by John the disciple.

GRAPHIC Galatia Circled

SLIDE Letter to Galatians written around 50 AD

It's after this journey around 50AD that Paul writes his first letter, which is probably the first document we have in our New Testament, his letter to the Galatians. There is no city of Galatia but instead it is this region where Paul first visits these early followers of Jesus. This letter is written to three or four churches in what is today central Turkey.

Paul then travels with several other church leaders from Antioch back down to Jerusalem because there is some debate around the requirements of the early followers of Jesus. Remember that most of the early followers of Jesus were Jewish but as more gentiles became Christian the question became, "How do we know they are part of God's family?" In Judaism, a male became a part of God's family by being circumcised when they were eight days old and a female was married to a Jewish male or was born to a Jewish father. There also was a question about whether they must obey the entire law of Moses which included

613 laws and commentary about how to obey them.

Paul and Barnabas testified that they don't as does the apostle Peter. Other Jewish Christians demanded they do these things and follow all these rules. We have dinner with the pastor this coming week on Wednesday at 6:00 PM and anyone is welcome to come. We talk about what makes summit church unique and are Methodist heritage of grace. We talk about our mission and our vision and our culture shaping behaviors. At the end of our time together, we give an opportunity to join, although it's not a requirement. There is simply an invitation to support this church with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, your study of God's word, your investment in future generations, and you're witness in the world. We talk about taking a step in each of these areas because we want each one of us to grow in our faith. I often say that God loves us right where we are and God loves us enough not to leave us there.

What if part of becoming a member met you had to follow the 613 Jewish laws of Moses and there was the requirement of circumcision, or being connected to a circumcised male in some way? I'm pretty sure there won't be anybody coming to dinner! Instead, Paul in the early church began to talk about baptism as the sign of the covenant and the way we become a part of God's family. I'm sure that Sebastian is relieved who is being baptized this weekend as all the 8th graders are being baptized and confirmed next weekend. Paul writes these words to the church in Colossae in chapter 2.

BIBLE

¹¹ When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. ¹² For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

These words in this letter also point to our purpose again and the work that God does in our life when we have faith in Jesus Christ. It's not about a physical procedure or some thing that we must do, but an act of faith which buries our old self which is filled with this idea of needing to earn salvation and earn love. Instead, we receive the gift of new life because we trust in the mighty power of God who raised Christ from the dead and who can make all things new.

Paul heads back to Antioch with this clarity that people don't need to be circumcised or follow 613 laws of Moses to be followers of Jesus, but instead they should be baptized. He and another of the church leaders named Silas head out on the second missionary journey.

GRAPHIC Paul's Second Missionary Journey

They leave Antioch and travel through the Cilician gates that we talked about last week, which are these mountains at the top curve as they head towards Derbe. They also revisit the churches in Lystra, Iconium, and Psidium Antioch. They head towards Troas and on their way, Paul has a dream of a man from Macedonia, which is modern day Greece, coming to visit him. The man in the dream beckons him across the Aegean Sea and so they travel on a ship the next day to Neapolis, then on to Philippi. Let's stop right there for a moment.

SLIDE Blank

Paul is going to start the first church on European soil here at the city of Philippi. Paul goes to the river and invites people to come to faith and be baptized. I've been there several times and it's a beautiful experience to be in Philippi. We went to the Zygaktis river and remembered how God called Lydia. Lydia, a single mom with two kids, says yes to Jesus through Paul's preachings. There is a place where you could stand by the river and remember your baptism. I thought I would share with you what we saw when we went to the ruins of Philippi and experienced this moment in the river together.

VIDEO Philippi (Stacey make or pull from last series on Paul OR use

the one I have and put a picture at end of our team on our trip being baptized at Philippi)

GRAPHIC Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Paul is placed in prison at one point in Philippi and then run out of town where he heads to Thessalonica. After three weeks he is threatened with the beating and so he leaves and heads to Berea. He travels by boat to Athens where he will preach an amazing sermon. We found this story and this sermon in Acts 17. I have read it from that place with several groups touring the area. We don't have time to read it today, but you'll get a chance to read it this week in the meditation moments. He preaches this sermon to the leadership of Athens on the place we call Mars hill. Luke tells us in the book of acts that hardly anyone converged to the Christian faith in Athens.

SLIDE BLANK

Whenever I read these stories about the apostle Paul, I am reminded of the fact that Paul doesn't seem to be very successful by the standards we would gauge success. He is often chased out of town and sometimes there seems to be no effect of his preaching and teaching. We don't hear much about Berea again and he doesn't write a letter that we know of what the people in Athens did because no church gets started. However, a man named Demetrius does convert to following Jesus in Athens and eventually he becomes the bishop of this region.

SLIDE Our purpose is to be faithful

When I was a college ministry intern at Iowa State University one of my favorite people on staff was an ordained pastor, whose name was Jim. Jim was the caring ministry director, and he didn't really like preaching or many of the other things that pastors are expected to do. Instead, he cared for students and people, and I will never forget him saying that God didn't call him he felt to be successful by leading a large church or preaching in front of crowds of thousands, but instead to simply be faithful. It's a good reminder that each of us has a different

purpose and some might be seen as more successful but all of us can be faithful, living out a life that it's clear that God made us to love us. Jim helped me to let go of the world's idea of success and instead focus on who God was calling me to be.

GRAPHIC Paul's Second Missionary Journey

GRAPHIC Athens to Corinth Map

GRAPHIC Map with Corinth Canal

GRAPHIC Athens to Corinth Map with Arrow

Paul is then going to travel from Athens to Corinth, which is about 55 miles. This journey will take him across the isthmus peninsula. I have circled this line, which is a canal that connects the Adriatic Sea on the top to the Aegean Sea on the bottom. Ships would take this route because it was the fastest way. Notice as we go back to the larger map that to get there you would have to go all the way around this bottom part of the map. This area at the bottom of that turn is one of the most dangerous parts of the sea to navigate. Ships were often wrecked in this area which is talked about in Homer in the odyssey. Could avoid passing through this area called the Peloponnese if you went on the Corinth canal. Of course, that canal was not built during the time of Paul but as a more recent development. We have crossed that canal on several occasions with groups and so here's a picture of it. There also is a rendition of what it would have looked like during the time of Paul when ships were pulled across this by slaves.

GRAPHIC Corinth Canal Today

GRAPHIC Ancient Channel Diolkos Road

GRAPHIC Image of Diolkos Road

You can see what the canal looks like today and then what it looked like back in the time of Paul because of the ruins that still are present. You can also see this image of the slaves pulling that boat or pulling cargo across that road. This meant two things, which is why the city of Corinth

and Corinthians is such an important book for us today. This was a port city which had people from all over the world going through it and they often had a day or two with nothing to do while their cargo or ship was pulled across the road. In the ancient world, Corinth was known as a wild place not unlike something like Las Vegas or any other city where there was lots of interesting behavior. The word for immorality in the 1st century included the word Corinth because it was so well known for crazy living. Prostitutes were often called Corinthian girls throughout the Roman Empire.

VIDEO Corinth

GRAPHIC or VIDEO Summit members taking Communion

(From Stacey if we have it)

Paul begins to preach in the synagogue until people become followers of Jesus and then he is kicked out of the synagogue, and he begins to preach in the streets. He stays here for 18 months and it's a powerful place where we see the temple to apollo which stood for 100 years before Paul arrived. These are the ruins of the city center and the hill behind it is called the Acrocorinth. There is a piece of what archaeologists believe was the synagogue in Corinth that has been uncovered. We stand among all these stories which happened in the book of Acts.

There is the Bema where Paul is questioned before the religious and political leaders. The background you again see the Acrocorinth on top of the hill. When you go to the top you find a temple to Aphrodite where all the prostitutes would come and pray before they came down into the city. The priestesses were prostitutes who would walk down this valley into town and offer themselves to the people of Corinth.

We learned last week that the words that we use for communion come from one of Paul's letters to the people of Corinth and so we took communion while we were in the city to remember that it is here where Paul gave these words. Paul will visit Corinth two or three more times

because it was such an important city and an eclectic and diverse church. He wrote at least 4 letters to the people in Corinth. We have two of those letters and we believe part of a third letter that is included in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

SLIDE Porneo = “sexual immorality” = dehumanizing sex

One of the main things that Paul speaks about when he writes to the people of Corinth is the Greek word Porneo, which means sexual immorality or dehumanizing sex. The main issue that Paul saw which was rampant in Corinth was sex that was used to turn people into objects. We sometimes make the mistake of expanding this word to mean more than it did for the apostle Paul and for people living in the city of Corinth. You might recognize the word as it's the base of our word pornography or porn.

The entire Roman world knew that Corinth was a hypersexualized culture. Paul is writing to them to encourage them to follow Jesus rather than their sexual desires which turn people into objects and cause our sinful nature to separate us from God and from others and from ourselves. He writes these words and 1 Corinthians 5.

BIBLE

¹² You say, “I am allowed to do anything” —but not everything is good for you. And even though “I am allowed to do anything,” I must not become a slave to anything.

BIBLE

^{13b} But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.

BIBLE

¹⁵ Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶ And don't you realize that if a man joins

himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her?

BIBLE

¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ²⁰ for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

Pulse speaks more about this idea of Porneo, using other people as objects to gratify ourselves, than all of his letters combined. They are struggling because they live in a culture that has turned people into objects by using sex in religious ceremony even. People are selling their bodies and buying sexual gratification. He is seeing the body of Christ destroyed and people are forgetting that they were made by God to be loved by God, not by their sexual desires. Some were being told that this is how you know you are loved, if you sell your body or if you buy someone else's body.

Paul is telling his people that their bodies are not meant to be bought and sold and they were made for a purpose much greater because our bodies contain the Holy Spirit. We are made in the image of God and to degrade them or demean them causes pain and separation and hurt. We were called to live for something higher than sexual immorality which turns people into objects.

I share that with you because as your pastor I have seen the pain of our hypersexualized culture and what it does to us. We know through research that viewing explicit pornography rewires our brains and changes our body which is that temple of the Holy Spirit. It not only dehumanizes others, but it dehumanizes us and our spouse if we are married. I've shared with you before that I have had many people in my office that have said they wish their spouse had slept with someone instead of becoming addicted to pornography because of how painful it is to be turned into an object. We know that spending lots of time looking at explicit images changes how we view our spouse and make it nearly

impossible to be in healthy romantic relationships.

What I've learned is that for many an addiction to something like pornography is really a symptom of a much deeper issue which is that we don't believe that God made us to love us. In many ways it represents a hatred of ourselves and of the opposite sex, which I think Paul understood and is why he spoke about it so much.

We also know that there is always hope in this area of our lives. There is forgiveness and restoration. What's fascinating is that there is one other area that Paul talks about in his letter to the Corinthians and mentions in every single one of his letters. While the issue of sexual immorality is certainly something we should be concerned with, in many ways it is this one which leads to conflict over all the other areas that we find issues in the church. Remember that the reason Paul writes each of his letters is because there is something happening in the church that needs to be addressed and that he has heard about. He writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus, and he says these words in the first chapter, which tells us this is one of his primary concerns.

BIBLE

¹⁰ I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. ¹¹ For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. ¹² Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."

¹³ Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not!

Can you imagine Christians fighting and being divided? It still happens to this very day and it's this passage which has me say to you

often that 80% of what we believe is the same as other Christian denominations so let's be big hearted enough not to sweat the other 20%. While we might not all agree on every detail we can't agree on the purpose of our lives and the purpose of the gospel which is that we were made by God to be loved by God. We are saved by what Jesus Christ has done on the cross and not by anything a pastor or politician does or doesn't do.

I do find it reassuring that there have been divisions in the church from the very beginning, even for the apostle Paul who wrote his letters. I do find it fascinating that many of us get hung up on lots of other issues that Paul talked about and we don't really press this one very hard because the truth is that not all of us might struggle with Porneo but we all struggle with thoughts of division and wanting our own way and thinking that how we do faith is the best and most important.

It's interesting because these conflicts that Paul writes about were between groups that we might consider liberal or conservative, charismatic or non-charismatic, evangelical or mainline, Jews and gentiles, slave and free, between the rich and the poor, between those who loved Paul as their pastor, and between those who didn't like him very much. Some liked Apollos better or Peter. They disagreed over meat which had been sacrificed to idols and many other things which is why they wrote to the apostle Paul to get his opinion.

What I know is that we struggle with divisions. We saw it in our local elections this past week and we will see it in 2026, and I know many of you are super excited for 2028 and the next presidential election. Paul is trying to help those early followers of Jesus remember their purpose which is above and beyond any division. He talks about all these divisions for the first 12 chapters of the 1st letter to the Corinthians and then we get to chapter 13 and it's a culmination of everything he has been talking about. I always find it humorous that first Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings because it was written to followers of Jesus who conflicted with each other, and there is never conflict in a marriage so why would

we need that!

Let's remember as we hear these words and read them together that they were written to followers of Jesus who were divided from each other and because of that from God and if they were honest, from themselves internally. You see divisions do the same thing that Porneo does, which is objectify other people and make them into objects Instead of humans who are children of God, made in the image of God to be loved by God. These were written to the United States today as we find ourselves divided and polarized. More than 60% of Americans say they are followers of Jesus and that's great, which means we should take these words seriously because they were written to us by the apostle Paul some 2000 years ago.

We honor veterans today, many of whom lived out their purpose and died for our nation to be united and not divided. They gave their lives for us to be free to disagree and to also be free to worship like we can do today. I would say the best way we could honor those who have given their lives and served our nation is to learn to live out these words, even when it's hard. I'm going to invite you to read these words with me as they appear on the screen because they remind us of our purpose.

BIBLE

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. ³ If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

When I read these at weddings, I always put the names of each person and the word for love just to remind them that this is meant to be lived out and not just said at the wedding ceremony. You might think

about putting your name in there as we say these words together.

BIBLE

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

BIBLE

⁸Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!

BIBLE

¹³Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

These words remind us that the primary Christian ethic throughout the entire New Testament is agape love, sacrificial love, a love that we choose. Every book in the New Testament has this as its focus. Jesus says this is the most important commandment, to love God and to love others as we love ourselves. He tells his disciples that this is how people will know that we are following him, by the way we love each other. This is a love that seeks the best for others even when it's hard. This is about being a Barnabas for others, it's an encouraging love. It's about lifting other people up and putting their needs before our own. If two people live this in a context of Christian marriage, then the relationship can survive anything. If we do this with employees, it will change our work environment. If we do this with our friends, it changes our relationships.

What I've learned is that without this ethic, we do the very thing Paul was warning against, which is we dehumanize others. We turn them into objects instead of seeing them as people who were made in God's image to be loved by God. Jesus commands us to do this in our marriages

and with our children, in our work environments and in our friendships, and yes, even in our politics. I had someone tell me once they didn't think that was true and that in politics we didn't have to follow these commandments. I gently reminded them to take it up with Jesus because when we don't do this in any area of our lives, we miss out on our purpose of being made by God to be loved by God. We don't just destroy others, we destroy ourselves.

SLIDE Does this look like my life?

We should ask ourselves regularly a question. Am I patient? And my kind? Am I not being jealous or boastful or rude? Am I not demanding on my own way but instead giving myself away? Am I not irritable or resentful? Am I not keeping score of when I've been wronged? Am I not rejoicing and wrongdoing but rejoicing when the truth wins out? Am I not giving up, remaining hopeful, not losing faith, and enduring through the most difficult of circumstances? Do I believe that faith, hope, and love will last forever, and the greatest of these is love?

These things are meant to be our purpose. We will never be perfect, and we can't always live into these things, but we do know that we are designed and made for these things because we are made in the image of God. We invite the Holy Spirit to come inside and to work in us, which is why we pray for that Holy Spirit to fill someone and surround them when they are baptized.

My hope is that every morning we might wake up and remember that our purpose is that we were made by God to be loved by God and we discover that most fully when we follow Jesus. I pray that we might commit to following Jesus every day and be an encouragement to others. I pray that we might live a life that is holy so that we don't turn other people into objects to be manipulated or used, but instead we see them as made in the image of God. I pray that we might remember our purpose is to practice agape towards others. I think if we do those things we will discover our purpose That will fill us with hope and meaning and

joy. Even when things don't work out just the way we want or we must live through seasons where we are waiting, God will work and make us into the image of Jesus Christ, sanctifying us and making us holy. Let's pray.

SLIDE Prayer

God, help us to remember your purpose, which is that you made us to love us. When the world seems to squash that idea, help us to take time through worship and prayer and reading your Word so we might remember this truth. Help us to share this message by being an encouragement to others, and may we be grateful for those who have encouraged us. We thank you for Paul and his willingness to follow so that we might hear your word today and be changed by the truth that Jesus is Lord and savior and friend. Help us to live the life of love which he offers to each of his children. Forgive us when we fall short and help us to start again so our lives look like those who are living a life of sacrificial love. We thank you for our veterans today who have done that on our behalf. Help us to be grateful for them and for your son Jesus Christ every single day. In his name we pray. Amen

November 8-9 Order

1. Maddie welcomes people.
2. Song: “Great Things”
3. Song: “Same God”
4. Jeff welcomes people:
 - a. QR Code and Connect Card
 - b. Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
5. Sermon
6. Offering (_____)
7. Med Moments
8. Baptism of Sebastian at 9 a.m.
9. Song: “New Wine”
10. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
11. Care Ministers
12. Connect with Us
13. Closing Prayer