

# 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's take your seats. Turn back in 1 Corinthians, page 952 of the Black Church.! Let's pray one more time as we come to God's Word. Father, in these moments we would ask that you would speak by that word that you have inspired and that we would hear and that by the same Spirit who inspired your word, we would be heard.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. There's something in all of us that really desires to be well thought of and to be respectable to those around us and to have a good reputation, not to be that guy or that girl or a bit odd.

And in this day and age, the unfortunate truth is that that makes being a Christian really difficult. We wish it wasn't the case, but it is the fact that the one we follow was rejected and mocked and beaten and eventually killed.

And he tells us that if we are going to belong to him, if we're going to follow him faithfully and obediently, we will have to walk the same path. Anyone who comes after me must take up his cross.

That is, he must do the same things that I did as I followed the path of obedience to my Father.

Well, that's a bracing way to begin this morning.

[ 1 : 38 ] But it is true. It is true. If anyone will come after me, Jesus says, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And the problem we have with that is that the draw to respectability, the draw to being well thought of and liked and respected and appreciated by those around us, it's so strong.

We don't want to be thought of as weird or, as the culture would have it now, bigoted. That's what we're told. The culture may, well, it will always invent another slur that will be unpleasant.

And because of that, we try to fit in as much as we can. We try and make sure that we don't stand out. We try and be respectable. That's been the case with the church and our nation for a while now.

We say to the world, we say to our neighbors, we say to our friends, don't think that I'm one of those kind of Christians, whatever those kind of Christians are. Look, look, I do all the same things you do.

I'm very much like you. We have the same values. Our children are very similar. It's just that I have some private beliefs about God that are really no different from the private beliefs that you have about whatever it is you believe.

[ 2 : 47 ] The UK church has managed to spin what Jesus calls us to such that the life of the cross that we say that we walk actually looks a lot like the lives that our neighbors and our work colleagues live.

And so, we turn to the church at Corinth. We're going to be here over the coming weeks, months probably, and what we realize is that their situation is not as unfamiliar to us as it should be.

So, by way of context, Corinth is an impressive city. It's cosmopolitan. It's wealthy. It's important. And the church in Corinth wants a Christianity that fits in with that. Cosmopolitan, wealthy, important, well-thought-of Christianity.

They love this church, loves influential people who do business and socialize in the right places.

That's chapters 8 and 10, 8, 9, and 10. And they're embarrassed about weakness and ordinariness in the eyes of the world.

If we're honest, we're just the same. We want an impressive Christianity that impressive people will embrace. Think about the fuss that we make when famous people or impressive people show any kind of interest in Christianity.

[ 3 : 59 ] Think about how much we'll suck up to famous people when they express an interest in our gospel. Corinth wants to identify with the right kind of leaders. And because of that, factions have crept in to the church.

Chapter 3, I follow Paul. I follow Apollos. Well, we have the cult of the leader everywhere today. Whether it's sport or politics or online.