

Church at the Coalface #1

Introduction

- We've become a church that plays safe
 - we've become conservative with a small 'c'
 - we avoid risks, we don't go out on a limb, we won't try new things, we won't start things in case they fail....
- Particularly true amongst we who value the Scripture highly, and are therefore concerned for things to be "right", true....
- Huge contrast with the New Testament church!
 - much of what we know about the New Testament church is from letters Paul and others wrote to correct them when they'd gone wrong
 - much less often in the New Testament do we find a church being chided for not doing anything - the luke-warm church in Laodicea (Rev 3:14ff) is one of the few examples
 - they risked things being wrong, they took steps of faith, they guffed it up... **but at least they did something!**
- Perhaps the most messed up church we know of in the New Testament is the church in Corinth!
 - maybe just that as we've got 2 full letters worth of advice, we know more...
 - but still a fairly chaotic place!
- Corinth background: port city, sinful, etc
- Spend time between now and Christmas in the morning services looking this church at the coalface, church that was struggling to learn how to be church in the challenging city of Corinth
 - listen to what God says to us about being church in our challenging situation through them

We are...

- Given what comes later, how Paul starts is pretty surprising!
 - he's going to be condemning them for all sorts of stuff
 - sexual sin - (5:1) "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife."
 - broken relationships - (6:1) If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?
 - carelessness with young Christians - (8:9) Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.
 - the Lord's Supper - (11:17) In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.
 - spiritual gifts - (12:1) Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.
 - etc!
- He starts by focusing on who they are in Christ, what sets them apart and marks them out as Christians, those benefits and marks that come from relationship with Christ:

We are Sanctified (v.2)

We are In Christ (v.2, 9)

We are Holy (v.2)

We are Grace-filled (v.3)

We are Peace-filled (v.3)We are Adopted (v.3)

- (Father)

We are Rich (v.5)

- (speaking and knowledge)

We are Spiritually Gifted (v.7)We are Hope-filled (v.7)

- (waiting...)

We are Strong (v.8)We are Blameless (v.8)

Application

- This is who we are, this is who you are!!
 - you are sanctified, in Christ, holy, grace-filled, peace-filled, adopted, rich, spiritually gifted, hope-filled, strong, blameless
 - that is quite a list!
- Some of us naturally feel small and insignificant unimportant, don't feel good about ourselves:
 - soak yourself in this lot!
- Some of us think too much of ourselves, have a false confidence in our own abilities, etc:
 - see how none of these things come from what we can do for ourselves, but from grace
- God lifts up the humble and brings down the proud
 - we are all one before him, a new people with a new identity
 - and it was this group of people that Jesus used to reach the hard place of Corinth
 - will he not also use us, who are similarly nothing in ourselves and everything in Christ, to reach the hard place of Dundee?