

I CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1:1-9

VERSE 1:

The writer of this epistle is clearly stated in the very first word. The Holy Spirit is the author, and Paul is the instrument through which He makes known the things of God. Sosthenes may have been the penman and writing it down as Paul dictated to him.

Paul immediately established his position as an apostle to the church. An apostle is one who had seen the resurrected Christ and had been commissioned directly by Him to preach and to lay the foundation for the church age. Paul was a called apostle. He did not assume the position as some false teachers did later, - II Corinthians 11:13-15, nor was he appointed by vote as was Matthias, Acts 1:15-26. Paul had seen Christ after His resurrection and ascension and was directly called by Him into the office of Apostle, Acts 26:12-20; Galatians 1:1, 11-16. Paul also claimed that his apostleship came because it was the will of God. It was by the power of God Paul was saved and called while on the road to Damascus – Acts 9:1-16.

There is a special reason why Paul began this letter by referring to the fact that he was divinely called to the apostleship. It arose from the fact his apostolic authority had been called into question by the false teachers at Corinth. This point needed to be fully established before continuing with what he had to say.

VERSE 2:

In his epistles, Paul exhorted believers about proper behavior only after he explained the wealth of their special position in Christ, Romans 12:1; Ephesians 4:1. Paul wanted the Corinthians to see who they were before he criticized them for their faulty behavior. He described them in four ways:

First, he called them the “church of God”. They were members of the one kind of church, which Christ built and purchased through His redemptive death and resurrection, - Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25.

The use of the word “church” here as in other places clearly shows the meaning of the word. This could not be a universal invisible church, but must conform to the meaning of the word: a body of called out believers, an assembly of the saints. It was a particular congregation of people in a local place, organized together for a special reason - to worship and carry out the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

The Greek word in the New Testament for church is “ecclesia” and it occurs in the New Testament 115 times. Out of those, 115 times it is translated “church” 112 times. The other three times is translated “assembly”. These three times are found in – Acts 19:32, 39, and 41 and refer to political meetings of the citizens of Ephesus. This assembly shows that the word means an organized body of people, not some invisible or universal meeting.

One church is not as good as another is, even though it might sound very religious to make this claim. The church that Jesus organized is “the church” for us to glorify the Lord in – Ephesians 3:21. If all of the so-called churches of our day are true churches, then the Lord created a mess and caused lots of confusion. Jesus built His church and it shall

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continue until He comes again. How sad it is, but the devil has confused the minds of hundreds of people to follow a false idea and be deceived.

The church is called “the church of God” because it was the kind of church Jesus had begun. It needs to be noted that although disorder had been introduced into the Corinthian church, there were separations and erroneous doctrines and there were some who gave evidence that they were not sincere Christians. Yet, the apostle still had no hesitation in calling them the “church of God”.

Second, they were “sanctified” positionally in Christ. They had been sanctified or set apart by God from the mass of heathen around them and devoted to God and His cause. It was by or through the Lord Jesus Christ, His power, and His authority, and His Spirit that they had been set apart, - John 17:19. Such position was only possible because they were judicially accepted – “in the beloved” Ephesians 1:6.

Third, he designated them as “called saints”. This is what they are in the sight of God. Take note that the little verb “to be” is in italics which means it is not in the original text. We are called saints. We do not become saints by what we do; we become saints because of our position in Christ. The word saint actually means, “set aside to God”. Every Christian should be set aside to God.

Fourth, the remaining portion of verse 2 opens it up to include every one of us, “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours”.

Here they were, God’s called-out people in Corinth, and here we are given a message to proclaim the good news of redemption in Christ Jesus. Here is the gospel for a city with all its corruption and licentiousness, vice, and ignorance, a gospel that is completely adequate for every situation when it is intelligently preached and intelligently understood.

This letter is addressed not just to a few people in Corinth, a city that is now in ruins, but to the church of Jesus Christ in any city of the world in any time of history, even in the times in which we live. We are God’s separated, called-out ones to a position of authority that is to say, a position in which we are supposed to know what we believe, to live it, and proclaim it. That is the only way through which others can find the living Christ. We may be called also, as was the church at Corinth, to live in a city famous for its corruption and licentiousness, but that is a place in which the church, by contrast, should shine at its brightest.

Verse 3:

If I were to ask you to define the word “grace” perhaps you would say, “It is the underserved loving-kindness of God which has met us in our sin and need.” Yes, Grace is that, but it is far more than that. It comes, as Paul says here, from God our Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father is the source and Jesus Christ is the channel through whom it comes. Grace, therefore, is His life of purity and holiness; His death that was sufficient to pay the price for our sins; and His present ministry by which He imparts the Holy Spirit today, enabling us to die to sin and live in His power.

The doctrine of grace reveals that God bestows blessings upon believers apart from any merit within them. Grace is given to us not because of goodness within us or because we deserve it. If we deserve it, it would not be grace.

It seems to me that “grace” in the New Testament is that which brings into our lives everything that delights the heart of God. There is grace to make me like the Master. This

grace would give me victory when otherwise I would fail, grace to make me patient where I would be impatient, and grace to enable me to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in every situation. - I Corinthians 15:10; II Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 11:6.

In Hebrews 4:16, we read, - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need". Folks, this is grace to sustain us in a time of trials and grace to enable us to overcome in every hour of temptation. We need grace every day of our lives. The grace of yesterday will not suffice for today. We need to go to God morning by morning to obtain, through prayer and meditation, supplies of grace to start the day right. But throughout the day we need to learn to "pray without ceasing" that our hearts may continually reach out to Him that new supplies of grace may come down to us constantly. We cannot keep ourselves for one moment; therefore, we need the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The word "peace" does not imply laziness or inactivity. It is movement without friction, creating perfect harmony. It also means balance and unity, which result from every part of your life being centered upon the will of God.

Now we need to take note that this "peace" is not speaking of peace with God, Romans 5:1. It is a settled thing - "through our Lord Jesus Christ". Instead, he is speaking of that peace of God, which we read of in Philippians 4:6-7. This verse has nothing to do with the sin question. That is settled.

We have peace with God because our sins have forever been put away, but this verse has to do with the question of things that would keep us anxious, the trials of life that press upon our hearts. What a great privilege to be able to go to God about them all, Philippians 4:6-7. Folks, not a trial ever comes to you, there is not a perplexity you are called upon to face, nor is there a need you will have to meet, but that God invites you to come to Him concerning it. You have the promises of God that He will supply that which is needed.

Verse 4:

No small part of this epistle is occupied with reproofs for the disorders, which had arisen in the church at Corinth. Before proceeding, however, to the specific statement of those disorders, the apostle commends them for the achievement, which they had really made. Paul did not withhold any praise where it was due.

Verse 5:

Paul was then thankful that "in everything" they "are enriched by Him". Whatever their abilities were they were bestowed by God, the Corinthians did not possess them by heredity or education. The enrichment included both quantity (in every thing) and quality (in all utterance and in all knowledge). In their communication of the truth (utterance) and in their grasp of the truth (knowledge) they had been especially blessed.

Not only are we saved by grace, but God provides through His grace all we need for our journey through this world. Among other things when He leads people together in church fellowship, the Lord makes Himself responsible through the same grace which saves to provide that which will profit, edify and build them into a church of coordinated and effective service for Him. What a real need we have as members of this church to surrender ourselves and claim the grace of God which will enable us to be all God would have us to be in His service. It is this in particular which Paul is speaking of here.

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He thanks God for the grace of God given them by Jesus Christ “that in everything”, he says, “Ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge”. In other words, this Corinthian church was one that was greatly blessed from the standpoint of gifts of the Spirit. There were people who could minister the Word of God, some were gifted as teachers, and there were many who had extraordinary gifts, Chapter 12. I wonder if there ever was a church more richly blessed from this standpoint than the Corinthian church. Yet, it is a solemn fact that they were very carnal. One may be very gifted, or may have great abilities individually, yet not necessarily be walking with God in the use of His gift. A church may be blessed with many special gifts of the Spirit, but these do not prove that it is any more spiritual than others.

Remember, it is grace on God’s part that leads the Holy Spirit to bestow these gifts upon His people. We need to respond to the grace of God by holding the gift in subjection to Him and not becoming occupied with the gift more than the Giver. The Corinthians became so occupied with the gifts that they all wanted to do miraculous things, thus their eyes were taken off Christ and fixed upon the manifestation of the gifts, and they lost their sweetness of communion with Him, the Giver of the gift.

Verses 6-7:

Paul was thankful that the “testimony of Christ was confirmed” in their midst. Paul originally went into the city and preached “Christ and Him crucified” - 2:1-2. He went in preaching the glorious message of Jesus Christ “in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power”, - 2:4. Christ confirmed the word of the apostle by the signs that followed - Mark 16:20. The book of Hebrews added that what was spoken by the Lord “was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?”, - Hebrews 2:3-4. As Paul worked miracles and as supernatural ability operated within them, the Corinthians knew that what Paul preached was absolute truth.

That recognition should cause them to respond to Paul’s following explanation and commands.

What saddened Paul was that the Corinthians had everything in which to do a work for Christ while they waited for Him, but they had failed to do so. Those God given gifts were to be used to the glory of God and edification of the church and did not need to be neglected for the Lord’s return is near.

Verse 8:

Paul was also thankful that God would confirm or guarantee the blameless position of the Corinthians until Christ’s return. The word “blameless” does not mean that the believers were without sin or blame in their practice. This letter clearly shows their faults. Rather it is a legal term. No charge of condemnation or a sentence to eternal death would ever be brought against them in the court of divine justice. Romans 8:33-34 – {33} “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. {34} Who is he that condemneth? It is that Christ died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”.

The word “blameless” may be translated “unimpeachable” or “unaccusable”. In other words, when we stand at last at the Judgment Seat of Christ, God Himself is going to see to it that no charge can stand against any believer because the Lord Jesus Christ has atoned for all our sins with His own blood.

Now he says, as it were, “I am absolutely sure that your confirmation will go on until the day of Jesus Christ”. In other words, Paul did not have the slightest thought that anyone who

had ever been born again would fail to reach heaven. He knew many of them might fail grievously on the way, but he knew also that they were not responsible to keep themselves but that they were being kept by the power of God.

He who saved us by His grace shall carry us through by His grace to the end. He knows how to deal with each individual child in order that we keep on keeping on. The conclusion is this, that every believer will appear - "blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Verse 9:

In the face of Corinthian's unfaithfulness, Paul was thankful for God's faithfulness. God is not just true, He is also trustworthy. His word is sure and His promises are certain.

Lesson 2

WORKSHEET

1. What was an apostle and what were the requirements to be one?
2. To whom was this letter written and why?
3. Explain why Paul did not need to call the church at Corinth a Baptist Church.
4. Explain "ecclesia" and why it must mean a local, visible assembly.
5. Why is one church not as good as another is?
6. What is positional and practical sanctification? Note that these Corinthians don't sound like sanctified saints. The work of the Holy Spirit was not very much in evidence in their lives. But they were positionally sanctified in Christ Jesus.
7. Define and explain grace.
8. What is the difference between peace with God and the peace of God? Can a person have one without the other?
9. What was Paul's most used method when writing to the church or to other Christians?
10. Does God's grace cease after salvation or does it continue? If so, how?
11. Through whom and by who is God able to bestow grace?
12. According to Vs:6-7, is one gift of more importance than another, or are all gifts important and to be used for the Lord?