

I CORINTHIANS

ADVANCED
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SERIES

David W. Cloud

The First Epistle to Corinth

By David Cloud

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Assignments

1. Each student is required to read 1 and 2 Corinthians at least three times during the course.

As you read, have pen and paper at hand and write down any questions you have. These can be discussed at the teacher's discretion, or the student can search out the answers on his own. This will help develop the good habits, first of thinking carefully about the text during Bible reading and, secondly, of searching for answers to things that are not understood. Each Bible student should make these his life-long habits. It is not enough to read the Bible; it must be understood, and that requires diligent study.

2. Memorize the following verses:

1 Corinthians 1:8-9, 10, 17, 26, 30; 2:12, 14; 3:13; 4:2; 5:11; 6:9-11, 18, 19-20; 8:9; 9:14, 24, 27; 10:11, 13, 21, 23-24, 31; 12:11, 27; 13:1-3; 14:12, 20-22, 33, 40; 15:3-4, 33, 51-52; 16:13-14

Introduction

The City of Corinth

- a. The Romans divided Greece into two provinces, Macedonia and Achaia, and Corinth was the capital of the latter. It is located about 46 miles east of Athens. Together with Rome and Ephesus, Corinth was one of the three principle cities of the Roman Empire. During Paul's day, the city had from six to seven hundred thousand inhabitants. Corinth was the chief city of Greece in the days of Alexander the Great. In 146 B.C., Corinth rebelled against Rome and was destroyed by the Roman general Mummius. In 46 B.C. it was rebuilt by Julius Caesar and declared a free city and within a short time was restored to its former splendor and prominence.
- b. The city grew very wealthy through its commercial advantages. It was located on the most important travel route from east to west and was built on an isthmus, or neck of land, dividing upper Greece from lower and separating the Aegean sea to the east of Corinth from the Ionian and Adriatic seas to the west. There were two harbors and ports that served Corinth, Cenchrea (Phebe's home, Rom. 16:1), nine miles to the south, and Lechaëum, a mile and a half to the north. It was quicker, cheaper, and safer to cross between the seas at this point than to go all the way around the southern tip of the Grecian peninsula, adding hundreds of miles to the journey and risking the rocky coasts and the storms that often brewed in that part of the Mediterranean. Smaller shipping vessels were actually transported across the isthmus from one sea to the other on a sort of ship railroad; and the cargo of larger vessels was offloaded, carried across, and reloaded onto ships on the other side. "The merchandise of Italy, Sicily, and the western nations, was landed at Lechseum on the west; and that of the islands of the Aegean sea, of Asia Minor, and of the Phoenicians, and other oriental nations, at Cenchrea on the east. The city of Corinth thus became the mart of Asia and Europe" (Barnes).

- c. The city was famous for its architecture. “Corinth exceeded all the cities of the world, for the splendour and magnificence of its public buildings, such as temples, palaces, theatres, porticos, cenotaphs, baths, and other edifices; all enriched with a beautiful kind of columns, capitals, and bases, from which the Corinthian order in architecture took its rise” (Adam Clarke). “The city was seemingly covered with gold. They had an artificial finish that they gave their buildings which in the light of the sun would make the whole building seem to be of gold. The Corinthian brass was of great commercial value. The style of architecture, called the Corinthian, is the most ornate of all the styles of architecture now in the world” (B.H. Carroll).
- d. The city built ships and had a distinguished navy. “It covered the sea with its ships, and formed a navy to protect its commerce. It was distinguished by building galleys and ships of a new and improved form; and its naval force procured it respect from other nations. Its population and its wealth were thus increased by the influx of foreigners” (Barnes).
- f. The Isthmian games were held nearby, drawing foreigners from distant parts of the world. The exercises in these games were, jumping, running, throwing the dart, and wrestling. Paul probably referred to these games in 1 Cor. 9:24-25; 2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:1.
- g. Corinth was a center of refinement, learning, and literature. Cicero called it “the light of all Greece.” “They were anciently famous for pagan learning, and had amongst them Stoics and Epicureans, who laughed at the resurrection of the body, and looked upon incest, adultery, and fornication, as very venial things, if at all unlawful” (Matthew Poole). “Corinth was a Greek city, and the Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. When Paul had preached at Athens and declared the fact of Christ’s resurrection, some of his listeners actually laughed at him (Acts 17:32). Most Greek philosophers considered the human body a prison, and they welcomed death as deliverance from bondage. This skeptical attitude had somehow invaded the church and Paul had to face it head-on” (*The Bible Exposition Commentary*).

- h. Because of its wealth and luxurious lifestyle, Corinth was infamous for moral corruption. “No place on earth was more debauched. They worshiped their gods with the most shameful orgies of obscenity and vice. It was while Paul was there, knowing the degradation of the heathen countries, and particularly of their worship, that he wrote that terrible indictment contained in Romans 1, where he describes the corruption of the heathen nations who had no knowledge of God” (B.H. Carroll). “So notorious was this city for such conduct, that the verb to *corinthize*, signified to act the prostitute, and a Corinthian damsel meant a harlot or common woman” (Adam Clarke).
- i. Another thing that contributed greatly to Corinth’s moral pollution was the sensual worship of pagan gods. There were temples to the Sun, Neptune, Diana, Apollo, Jupiter, Minerva, Sarapis, and others, but the chief goddess of Corinth was Venus Aphrodite (known as Astarte to the Phoenicians). “Corinth was devoted, or dedicated, thus to the goddess of love, or licentious passion; and the effect may be easily conceived. The temple of Venus was erected on the north side or slope of the Acrocorinthus, a mountain about half a mile in height on the south of the city. This mountain was covered with temples and splendid houses; but was especially devoted to Venus, and was the place of her worship. Her shrine appeared above those of the other gods; and it was enjoined by law, that one thousand beautiful females should officiate as courtesans, or public prostitutes, before the altar of the goddess of love. ... They were supported chiefly by foreigners; and from the avails of their vice a copious revenue was derived to the city” (Barnes).

The Church at Corinth, an overview

- a. The church was established on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, living and working with his friends Aquila and Priscilla.
- b. The church membership was largely converted from more humble walks of life (1 Cor. 1:26).
- c. The church members had formerly worshipped idols and had led very wicked lives (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 12:2).

- d. The church had serious problems, some of which were doubtless the product of the dissipation of the city itself and the former lifestyles of the members. For example, women were disorderly (1 Cor. 11:5-6) and there was drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:21), fornication (1 Cor. 5:1; 6:15-18), misuse of Christian liberty (1 Cor. 8:9), and association with idolatry (1 Cor. 10:21-22). The church was also tempted by human philosophy (1 Cor. 2:1-4), which was an integral part of their former lives. “The Corinthians, like all other Greeks, were greatly in danger of being deluded, and carried away by a subtle philosophy, and by a dazzling eloquence” (Barnes). “Previous habits of outward virtue have a vast influence on the consistency and steadiness of subsequent piety; and they who have been saved from the greatest lengths of depravity, should feel that they are in the greatest danger of relapse. It has, accordingly, always been found extremely difficult to maintain a high standard of moral excellence in a church which has been raised from, and is still surrounded by, a general corruption in the community” (Abbott’s *Illustrated New Testament Commentary*).
- e. That a church could be established in this wicked city is a tribute to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an encouragement to us in these apostate and dissolute last days.

The Theme of 1 Corinthians

Paul writes to correct and instruct the church and also to answer questions they had asked of him.

The church had been infiltrated by false teachers and Paul deals with them in a very plain and direct manner. See 1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Cor. 11:1-4, 12-15.

Important Features of 1 Corinthians

This unique epistle contains some of the most complete biblical teaching to be found in the entire New Testament on several important subjects. These are Disunity in the Church (1 Cor. 1-2), the Divine Inspiration of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:6-13), the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3), Church Discipline (1 Cor. 5), Marriage and Divorce (1 Cor. 7), the Believer’s Relationship with Idols (1 Cor. 7, 10), the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11), Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12-14), Christian

Love (1 Cor. 13), and the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15).

1 Corinthians is one of the most practical and important missionary manuals in the New Testament. It deals with a wide variety of things that arise in the context of church planting. These include Christian unity; philosophy vs. preaching; spirituality vs. carnality; church discipline; fornication, marriage and divorce; liberty vs. responsibility; the believer's relationship with idols; the Lord's Supper; the Christian's calling; the exercise of spiritual gifts; and New Testament giving. Consider, for example, 1 Cor. 9:19-23, where Paul carefully explains the difference between giving up one's liberty so as not to cause unnecessary offense to the gospel and going beyond this to doing something that is unlawful in this pursuit. It is right, for instance, to adopt a certain type of dress that is worn in the culture in which one is preaching the gospel, but it is not right to adopt any type of dress that goes against the moral standards of the Bible.

Paul bared his soul more in his letters to the church at Corinth than in any others. He gives many details of his life, ministry, and revelations that are found nowhere else. See 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 9:1-16, 15-27; 2 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:7-11; 6:4-10; 11:21-32; 12:1-12.

The Correspondence between Paul and Corinth

The following is adapted from Warren Wiersbe's *Outlines on the New Testament*:

The church at Corinth was established on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Paul then went to Ephesus and remained there for three years (Acts 19:1 ff).

It is likely that he made a second visit to Corinth (see 2 Cor. 13:1) to correct some of the problems there.

Once back in Ephesus, he wrote the church at Corinth a strong letter about fornication (see 1 Cor. 5:9), but this letter has been lost to us.

The church at Corinth then wrote a letter to Paul, possibly sending it with Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who were members of the church (1 Cor. 16:17). This letter asked several important questions about both doctrine and practice, and Paul answers these questions (as well as rebuking them for their

sins) in 1 Corinthians. (Note 1 Cor. 7:1; 8:1; 11:17.) Paul was still at Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:8).

He also sent Timothy on ahead to help the leaders unify and purify the church (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17 and 16:10-11). It is likely that the three Corinthian Christians mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:17 carried 1 Corinthians back with them.

Timothy returned to Paul with news that the church had received his letter but that some things were still not right.

Paul then dispatched Titus to Corinth to see that the believers obeyed his apostolic orders (2 Cor. 7:13-15). Titus then met Paul (2 Cor. 7:6-17) with the good news that the offender (1 Cor. 5) had been disciplined and that the church had obeyed Paul's instructions.

It was then that Paul wrote, along with Timothy, to commend the church and to encourage them to go on and finish the good work (2 Cor. 1:1). This is the second epistle to Corinth that is included in the Bible canon. Titus took this letter to Corinth and waited there to assist the church in raising its share of the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 12:17-18 and 8:6).

Comments on the epistles of first and second Corinthians by various authors:

"In I and II Corinthians there is more practical, details and scriptural instruction about the affairs in a New Testament church and the problems involved than in all the other epistles of the New Testament" (John R. Rice).

"I am more fully convinced than ever that there is need to emphasize the fundamental principles set forth in these letters given by inspiration through the apostle to the Gentiles, in order that Christians generally may be called back to the simplicity of early days. In First Corinthians we have the order that should prevail in Christian assemblies" (Harry A. Ironside).

"1 Corinthians is a book of holy writ concerning the Divine authority of which there was never any doubt, nor hath any portion of holy writ (for the quantity of it) a greater variety of matter, nor more of those *dosnohta*, things hard to be understood, which St. Peter (2 Pet. 3:16) tells us are in this apostle's Epistles; the difficulty of which much ariseth from our ignorance of some rites used in

the primitive church, but long since disused, and the usages of that country different from ours” (Matthew Poole).

“It has been said that the letters to the Corinthians are the most relevant books of the New Testament for the last half of the twentieth century. Truer words were never spoken” (George Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe*).

The Outline of 1 Corinthians

1. Greeting (1 Cor. 1:1-9)
2. Reproof and instruction (1 Cor. 1:10 - 15:58)
 - concerning carnality (1 Cor. 1:10 - 4:21)
 - concerning discipline (1 Cor. 5)
 - concerning resolving disputes (1 Cor. 6:1-8)
 - concerning fornication and other defilements (1 Cor. 6:9-20)
 - concerning marriage (1 Cor. 7)
 - concerning eating food offered to idols (1 Cor. 8)
 - concerning ministers and financial support (1 Cor. 9)
 - concerning idolatry (1 Cor. 10)
 - concerning the divine order for male and female and hair as a symbol of that order (1 Cor. 11:1-16)
 - concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)
 - concerning spiritual gifts and public worship (1 Cor. 12-14)
 - concerning resurrection (1 Cor. 15)
3. Final Things (1 Cor. 16:1-24)

Review Questions on the Introduction to 1 Corinthians

1. In what Roman province was Corinth located?
2. How far was it from Athens?
3. What sea was on the east side of Corinth?
4. How did shipping vessels cross the Corinthian isthmus from one sea to the other?
5. What form of architecture was Corinth famous for?
6. What games were held near Corinth?
7. What did the term “a Corinthian woman” refer to?

8. What was the chief goddess of Corinth?
9. On which one of Paul's missionary journeys was the church at Corinth established?
10. How long did Paul stay at Corinth on his first visit there?
11. What does 1 Cor. 1:26 say about the church's membership?
12. What is the theme of 1 Corinthians?
13. What verse tells us that there were false teachers at Corinth who denied the resurrection?
14. What are the ten subjects dealt with in 1 Corinthians more thoroughly than in any other part of the New Testament?
15. Why is 1 Corinthians one of the most practical and important missionary manuals in the New Testament?

SAMPLE

THE GREETING (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

1. Paul the apostle (1 Cor. 1:1)

a. Paul was an apostle of Jesus Christ. The term “apostle” means one who is sent, and the term is used in three ways in the New Testament:

- (1) The term “apostle” is used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1). Jesus was sent from God the Father into the world to provide redemption for mankind.
- (2) The term “apostle” is used in reference to the twelve men that were chosen by Christ to lay the foundation of the church (Lk. 6:13-16; Eph. 2:20). After Judas betrayed the Lord and hung himself, the eleven remaining apostles selected a man to replace him (Acts 1:15-26). Later we find that Paul was chosen directly by Christ to be an apostle (1 Cor. 15:7-9; 2 Cor. 12:11-12; Gal. 1:1). He was particularly the “*apostle to the Gentiles*” (Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 2:7-8).
- (3) The term “apostle” also is used in reference to Christian workers in general (2 Cor. 8:23; Acts 14:14; Phil. 2:25). The Greek word translated “apostle” (*apostolos*) is also translated “messenger” and “minister,” and is used to refer to Christian workers other than the Twelve. Christian workers were sent from the churches to particular ministries.

b. Paul was an apostle “*through the will of God.*”

- (1) Paul begins this epistle by expressing his divine authority. Compare Gal. 1:1. Paul’s call is described in Acts 9. At Corinth he was being attacked by false teachers and he needed to remind the church that he was not merely another preacher; he was an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God. “There was a special reason why he commenced this epistle by referring to the fact that he was divinely called to the apostleship. It arose from the fact that his apostolic authority had been called in question by

the false teachers at Corinth. That this was the case is apparent from the general strain of the epistle, from some particular expressions, 2 Cor. 10:8-10, and from the fact that he is at so much pains throughout the two epistles to establish his Divine commission” (Barnes).

(2) Paul is also expressing his humility in that he does not claim to be something in himself. He claims no position or authority other than that which was given to him by God. He does not exalt himself; he exalts his divinely-given office.

(3) What was true of Paul should be true for every preacher to some degree. A preacher must be called by God or he should stay out of the ministry. Woe be unto that man who runs but is not divinely sent (Jer. 23:21; Jam. 3:1). A preacher should also be humble, knowing that he is nothing without Christ and that he has no authority in himself.

c. Paul knew he was writing under divine authority in his position as an apostle. Many contemporary publications that deal with the early history of the New Testament claim that the apostles did not know that they were writing under divine inspiration and that the churches did not accept the writings as divinely inspired and collect them as such until a century or more later. This is a serious error. Paul knew he was writing by divine inspiration (1 Cor. 2:9-13) and the churches knew that they were receiving the Word of God. *“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”* (1 Th. 2:13).

2. Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1)

a. Sosthenes is probably the same man that is mentioned in Acts 18:17. He had been the chief ruler of the Jewish synagogue and was opposed to Paul’s preaching at first, but apparently he was converted and became a member of the church and a co-laborer with Paul. When this epistle was written, Sosthenes was with Paul in Ephesus. “Sosthenes was well

known at Corinth. He had been the chief ruler of the synagogue there. His conversion would, therefore, excite a deep interest; and it is not improbable that he had been conspicuous as a preacher. All these circumstances would render it proper that Paul should associate him with himself in writing this letter. It would be bringing in the testimony of one well known as concurring with the views of the apostle, and tend much to conciliate those who were disaffected towards him” (Barnes).

- b. It is possible that Sosthenes was Paul’s scribe in writing the epistle. That it was Paul’s custom to use scribes is evident from Rom. 16:22 and Col. 4:18.
- c. It was also Paul’s custom to associate others with him in his greetings to the churches (2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; 1 Th. 1:1).

3. The Church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2)

Paul began by reminding the Corinthian believers of their high calling in Christ Jesus, and soon he would begin to exhort them to live up to that calling.

- a. It was a church of God. This is one of the names that is given to New Testament churches. Each name emphasizes a different aspect of the church.
 - (1) The “*church of God*” or “*church of the living God*” appears many times in the New Testament (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 1:2; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:3; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15) and emphasizes the fact that the churches belong to the living and true God.
 - (2) The “*churches of Christ*” (Rom. 16:16) emphasizes the fact that the churches belong to Jesus Christ. He is the builder and founder (Mat. 16:18).
 - (3) The “*churches of the saints*” (1 Cor. 16:1) emphasizes the fact that the churches are made up of those that have been washed in Christ’s blood and set apart for Him.
- b. They were sanctified in Christ Jesus. The word “sanctify” is translated from the same Hebrew and Greek words from which we get “holy” and “saint.”

(1) The basic meaning is to be *set apart* for God's possession and purpose (Lev. 20:26). The believers at Corinth were set apart to God from the mass of pagans that surrounded them. "Sanctify" does not mean necessarily that the thing in itself is righteous. Even inanimate objects are said to be holy or sanctified. Notice the following examples:

(a) The ground upon which Moses stood was holy (Ex. 3:5). It was holy or sanctified because God was there and that made that piece of ground set apart from all other ground.

(b) The sabbath was holy (Ex. 16:23). The sabbath day is holy or sanctified because it is divinely set apart from and different from the other six days of the week.

(c) Aaron's garments were holy (Ex. 28:2). Aaron's garments were set apart from all other garments because they were designed strictly for God's service.

(d) Food is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:5). This means the food is set apart so that it is acceptable unto God and proper to eat.

(e) Believers are instructed to sanctify God in their hearts (1 Pet. 3:15). This means to set God apart in one's thoughts and affections so that He is not crowded out by other things.

(2) There are two parts to sanctification or holiness in the Christian life:

(a) These two parts are called *Position* and *Practice*. Positionally, every believer *is* sanctified because he has been cleansed and forgiven and set apart into God's family (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11). This position in Christ is eternal and unchanging (Heb. 10:10). Because we *are* sanctified positionally, we should *live like* it in a practical sense in our daily lives. This practical aspect of sanctification is changeable, depending upon how the believer lives on a day to day basis (1 Thess. 4:3-4).

(b) The two aspects of sanctification are also called *Standing* and *Walk*. Our standing in Christ is sure and eternal and

unchanging, but our walk changes according to how we live. The believer's standing is described in Ephesians 1-3, and his walk is described in Ephesians 4-6. These two aspects of sanctification are described in Eph. 5:8. "*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.*" The believer is light in Christ, so he should walk in the light; he is a child of God, so he should live like one.

(c) The two aspects of sanctification are also called *Relationship* and *Fellowship*. The believer's *relationship* as a child of God is sure and eternal; he has been born into God's family by faith in Jesus Christ; but his *fellowship* with God day by day in this present world is determined by how he lives. We see this in any parent-child relationship. You were born into your father's family and are his child and will be his child no matter how you act, but you cannot be in good fellowship with your earthly father unless you obey him. When the believer sins he is still a child of God, but fellowship is broken until restored by confession (1 John 1:6-9). Notice in 1 John 1:6 that the theme of this passage is "fellowship" rather than salvation. We are born again into God's family through faith in Christ, but we maintain our daily fellowship with Him through walking in the light and confession of our sins.

c. They were called to be saints. This does not mean they would become saints sometime in the future; they were already saints. Compare verse 1, which says Paul was "*called to be an apostle.*" He was already an apostle. This was his calling from God, and it is the believer's calling to be a saint.

(1) "Saint" means one who is set apart for God. The words "saint," "holy," and "sanctify" are translated from the same Greek word.

(2) The term "saint" is one of the most common New Testament terms used to describe a believer. It is used 62 times in the New Testament and six times in the first epistle to Corinth. See 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1-2; 14:33; 16:1, 15.

(3) Every believer is a saint because God has washed him in Christ's

blood and brought him into His family. Paul said “*all that be in Rome*” are saints (Rom. 1:7). Even the carnal Christians at Corinth were called saints (1 Cor. 1:2).

- (4) A sinner becomes a saint by calling upon the name of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). Compare Rom. 10:9-13.
- (5) The calling to be a saint is through the gospel (2 Th. 2:14). It is the great mercy of God to call lowly, condemned sinners to be set apart from this world to His glorious salvation. All that hear the gospel are called.
- (6) Contrast this with the Roman Catholic doctrine that only certain special Christians are saints and only in heaven. Mother Teresa and the late Pope John Paul II, for example, are in the process of being canonized as “saints” because they allegedly were very special Christians, but there is no scriptural basis for this. Christians are not saints because they are great in themselves and have performed extraordinary deeds; they are saints because they have a sinless Savior and He has removed their sin before God (Rev. 1:5-6).

d. They were associated with all who call on the name of Jesus Christ -- “*with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours*” (1 Cor. 1:2).

- (1) It is important to recognize the fellowship of the believers, to understand that though churches are autonomous under their one Head Jesus Christ and believers are congregated into the individual church bodies, they are also part of the family of God and are spiritually linked with every other true church and believer.
 - (a) This does not give support to the ecumenical philosophy, which downplays the importance of doctrine and promotes the unscriptural judge-not philosophy. We will see in 1 Corinthians that there are many things that the believer is to judge.
 - (b) This also does not mean that every individual and church that

calls upon Jesus must be blindly, uncritically accepted. There are false christs, false gospels, and false spirits (2 Cor. 11:1-4). There are damnable doctrines that if believed make it impossible to be saved (2 Pet. 2:1). There are those who bring not the doctrine of Christ, and they are not to be received (2 John 8-11).

- (2) The fact that Paul addressed his epistle to all believers and not only to the church at Corinth reminds us of the universality of the New Testament epistles. They are divinely inspired and were never intended only for the particular churches and individuals to whom they were addressed. Compare Col. 4:16; 1 Th. 5:27.
- (3) All true believers are equal in Christ. He is *“both theirs and ours.”* *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Gal. 3:28).
- (4) Jesus Christ is the believer’s Lord and God. We call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:2). The Greek word translated “Lord” is “kurios.” It is the same word used for God in Mat. 12:29. To call Jesus Christ Lord is to acknowledge that He is Almighty God.

4. Grace and peace (1 Cor. 1:3)

a. This is a description of the believer’s new position before God through Jesus Christ. Before we are saved we are separated from God and are under His condemnation because of sin (Rom. 1:18). We are enemies of God (Rom. 5:10). In Christ all of this is changed and we have grace and peace. The blessing that is encompassed in these two short words is incalculable.

- (1) Grace is the free, unmerited blessing of God because of Christ. Grace is free and without works; it is a gift that was purchased by Christ’s blood (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9).
- (2) Peace means we have been reconciled to God because of Christ (Rom. 5:1); we are no longer enemies of God because of sin.

- b. Grace comes before peace, because it is God's grace in Jesus Christ that brings the believer into a position of peace with God.
- c. Grace and peace are from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Note that Jesus Christ is equal to God the Father. These blessings are "*from God our Father, AND the Lord Jesus Christ,*" and only God can give salvation, forgive sins, grant spiritual peace.

5. Paul's thanksgiving (1 Cor. 1:4)

- a. He was thankful for God's blessings on this church even though it was carnal and had so many problems. Note that Paul did not ignore error and carnality, but he was able to see God's blessing even in the midst of these things. "A willingness to commend those who do well is as much in accordance with the gospel, as a disposition to reprove where it is deserved" (Barnes).
- b. This is a good example for pastors. There are always many problems in the church and many difficulties in the lives of church members, and a wise pastor will not lose sight of the blessings of God even while he seeks to deal with those things that are in need of correction.
- c. This is also a good example for church members. There will always be things in the church that one does not agree with and that need to be corrected, and while these things should not be ignored it is also important that the believer not lose sight of God's blessings in the congregation.

6. The blessing of God on the church (1 Cor. 1:4-9)

Note that all blessings come by God's grace and are therefore the product of Christ's atonement (v. 4).

- a. They were enriched in spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:5-7). Compare 2 Cor. 8:7.
 - (1) What is utterance and knowledge?
 - (a) *Utterance* refers to proclaiming the Word of God. It refers to the revelatory gifts of prophesying and tongues (1 Cor. 14:6).

It also refers to preaching and teaching in general.

(b) *Knowledge* refers to understanding the Word of God. “They had understood the doctrines which they had heard, and had intelligently embraced them. This was not true of all of them, but it was of the body of the church” (Barnes).

(2) It is important to have both utterance and knowledge. If one is capable in utterance but lacks knowledge, his speech will be empty or even heretical. If one has knowledge but is incapable of uttering it, he will not be able to help anyone. It is not enough to know the things of God; we are accountable to speak the truth to others, to be a light to this dark and needy world.

(3) These gifts were from God (1 Cor. 1:5). All spiritual gifts are from God (1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 2:4). They are not natural gifts and they are different from natural gifts. They cannot be worked up or learned or obtained through any natural human means, though they can be stirred up and improved if present (2 Tim. 1:6).

(4) These gifts were the evidence of their testimony (1 Cor. 1:6). Genuine salvation has an evidence. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). Faith that does not produce a changed life is not saving faith.

b. They were waiting for the coming of Christ (1 Cor. 1:7).

(1) The literal return of Jesus Christ is a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament faith (Acts 1:11). His return will be in two parts: He will first return to rapture the church-age believers out of the world before the Tribulation (1 Th. 4:13-18), then He will return after the Tribulation to establish His kingdom on earth (Mat. 24:29-30). The New Testament believer is not looking for the antichrist; he is looking for Christ Himself to catch him away. He is not looking for the wrath of God that will be poured out during the Tribulation but for redemption from wrath (1 Th. 5:1-9). 1 Thessalonians 5:4 says the believer is not in darkness and will not be overtaken by the day of the Lord, and verse 9 says God has not

appointed us to wrath.

- (2) Looking for Christ's return is an evidence of genuine faith (Heb. 9:28). Those who live carelessly without the awareness that Christ could return at any time are like the foolish virgins who slept (Matt. 25:1-13).
- (3) Looking for Christ's return is a great motivator in the Christian life. It motivates the believer to be pure and zealous and ready to stand before his Lord (Tit. 2:12-13; 2 Pet. 3:11-12).

c. They had security in Christ (1 Cor. 1:8-9).

- (1) This is a plain and wonderful promise that the believer will be confirmed to the end and be blameless in the day of Christ. And those to whom the promise was given were carnal and not living as they should, but they had genuine faith in Christ and that is salvation. "To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our own corruption and Satan's temptation, that we may appear without blame in the great day! O glorious expectation, especially when the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes! He who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son is faithful, and will do it, 1 Th. 5:24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him" (Matthew Henry).
- (2) This glorious promise is based on God's faithfulness, which is one of His great attributes. Compare 1 Cor. 10:13. God is faithful to keep the believer because of the price that was paid by his Son Jesus Christ. The only way a believer can be blameless is because of what Jesus Christ has done for him. "The object of Paul, in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God here is to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life. The evidence that they will persevere depends on the fidelity of God; and the argument of the apostle is, that as they had been called by him into the fellowship of his Son, his faithfulness of character would render it certain that they

would be kept to eternal life. The same idea he has presented in Phil. 1:6: 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ'" (Barnes).

Review Questions on the Greeting (1 Cor. 1:1-9)

1. What is the basic meaning of "apostle"?
2. What are the three ways that "apostle" is used in the New Testament?
3. How did Paul differ from the other apostles?
4. When the Greek word "apostolos" is used in the New Testament to describe a Christian worker in general, how is it translated?
5. Why does Paul open this epistle by stating that he was an apostle?
6. What verse says the church at Thessalonica received Paul's teaching as "the word of God"?
7. In what chapter of the book of Acts is Sosthenes mentioned?
8. Why are the churches in the New Testament called by different names?
9. What other two words are translated from the same Greek and Hebrew words as "sanctify"?
10. What is the basic meaning of "sanctify"?
11. How can believers sanctify God in their hearts?
12. What are the two parts of sanctification in the Christian life?
13. What are the two major divisions to the epistle to Ephesus?
14. What verse in 1 John tells us that the theme of that epistle is the Christian's fellowship?
15. How does the believer maintain fellowship with God?
16. What does "saint" mean?
17. How many of the believers in the church at Rome were saints?
18. How does a sinner become a saint?
19. How do we know that the epistles to Corinth were intended for all churches and believers and not merely for that one church?
20. In what verse is the Greek word "kurios" used for God?
21. The term "grace be unto you, and peace" is a description of what?
22. What verse says that if something is by works it is not by grace?
23. What two verses say that grace is the free gift of God?
24. What does the Bible mean when it says the believer has peace with God?
25. What verse says if any man be in Christ he is a new creature?

26. What verse says the believer is not in darkness and will not be overtaken by the day of the Lord?
27. What verse says God has not appointed the believer to wrath?
28. What verse says God will confirm the believer unto the end?

SAMPLE

REPROOF AND INSTRUCTION (1 Corinthians 1:10 - 15:58)

Many commentaries divide 1 Corinthians into two major parts: Rebuke of Sin (1 Cor. 1-6) and Reply to Questions (1 Cor. 7-16), and this is a good division; but since the rebuke and instruction are intermingled throughout the entire book I have decided to divide it along the broad theme of “rebuke and instruction” instead.

Reproof and instruction concerning carnality (1 Cor. 1:10 - 4:21)

Reproof and instruction concerning discipline (1 Cor. 5)

Reproof and instruction concerning disputes in the courts (1 Cor. 6:1-8)

Reproof and instruction concerning fornication and other defilements (1 Cor. 6:9-20)

Reproof and instruction concerning marriage (1 Cor. 7)

Reproof and instruction concerning eating things offered to idols (1 Cor. 8)

Reproof and instruction concerning ministers and financial support (1 Cor. 9)

Reproof and instruction concerning idolatry (1 Cor. 10)

Reproof and instruction concerning the divine order for male and female and hair as a symbol of that order (1 Cor. 11:1-16)

Reproof and instruction concerning the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

Reproof and instruction concerning spiritual gifts and public worship (1 Cor. 12-14)

Reproof and instruction concerning resurrection (1 Cor. 15)

REPROOF AND INSTRUCTION CONCERNING CARNALITY (1 Corinthians 1:10 - 4:21)

The carnality of this church was evident in all of the problems and errors discussed in Paul's epistles to them (including the failure to practice church discipline, taking one another to court, the abuse of the Lord's Supper, the misuse of spiritual gifts, etc.), but for the sake of our outline we are dealing with the carnality issue most fully in this section where it is specifically mentioned. See 1 Cor. 3:1-4.

1. Their carnality was evident in their man-centered disunity (1 Cor. 1:10-16).

a. Paul begins this section by exhorting the Corinthian believers to maintain scriptural unity (1 Cor. 1:10).

(1) He beseeched them. Notice the gentle manner by which he exhorts them. "It is the language of affectionate exhortation, rather than of stern command. Addressing them as his brethren, as members of the same family with himself, he conjures them to take all proper measures to avoid the evils of schism and of strife" (Barnes).

(2) He beseeched them by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(a) This was to motivate them. Paul wanted the church to think about its testimony before Christ, how that it was Christ that was hurt and displeased by their disobedience and carnality. The highest and most important motivation that the believer has in living a holy and obedient life is to please the Lord who saved him.

(b) This was to challenge them that there is only one Head of the churches, and that is Jesus Christ Himself. By beseeching them in the name of Jesus Christ, Paul tries to make them aware that their divisions are carnal and man-made. "The venerable