

1 Corinthians Chapter 1

We are beginning one of the most important letters that Paul wrote to the churches he had begun. The church at Corinth had been established on one of Paul's missionary journeys.

The city of Corinth was believed to be a city of about 600,000 people when this was written to them. One of the outskirts of Corinth was Cenchrea, which was a seaport. This was a thriving city with much evil. They were thought of as being one of the wealthiest cities of the area. There was a mixture of nationalities here. Greeks and Romans made up the majority of the people.

This city had many false gods and goddesses. The most prominent of the false worship was of Aphrodite. There were over 1000 prostitutes working to win converts to this very sensual religion. This was a very evil city. The democratic way of life was foremost here, and debates were allowed on all subjects. This perhaps, was the reason Paul had an easy time being heard at first.

The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways.

We will find in this book, as we do in many of Paul's writings that he deals with them within the confines of their customs. He does not try to change their life style. He shows them that Christianity is for all people. We will get into this a little more as we go along. One thing that we must remember from the outset: There were no iron clad doctrines that were to be used in all of these churches. We will see Paul trying to establish rules and regulations for each church that they could live with in the light of their customs.

In one way or another, wrong living always stems from wrong belief such as sexual sins including divorce, are inevitably related to lack of belief or trust in God's plan for marriage and the family (7:1-40).

Before, Paul had written the church other correspondence (see 5:9), which was also corrective in nature. Because a copy of that letter has never been discovered, it has been referred to as "the lost epistle". There was another non-canonical letter after 1 Corinthians, usually call "the severe letter" (2 Cor. 2:4).

1 Corinthians 1:1 "Paul, called [to be] an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes [our] brother,"

First we need to ask, who is this Paul? We know that he was a Pharisee. We, also, know that he was a Roman. His mother was a Hebrew and his father was a Roman. Paul was his Roman name even though it is taken from a Greek name Paulos, which means little. His Hebrew name was Saul which means asked. Paul was a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. We are told that he was a student of Gamaliel. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

He was so against Christianity and its teachings that he persecuted Christians. On his way on one of his many journeys to capture Christians and put them in jail, he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ, in a great and blinding Light. Paul was sought out of God to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Notice, in the verse above that it was God's will for Paul to be an apostle. The word "apostle" means ambassador, messenger, or delegate. It also means, he that is sent. I like the last meaning best. In this case, it means one sent with authority. He had the power of attorney from the Lord Jesus. We must look at who sent him: Jesus Christ.

Sosthenes (of safe strength), had been the ruler of the synagogue at Corinth. The fact that Paul calls him brother makes me believe that he converted to Christianity. On one occasion, he was beaten for bringing Paul before the civil court at Corinth (Acts 18:12-17).

1 Corinthians 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called [to be] saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:"

This church had been established on Paul's second missionary journey. Notice that Paul writes this letter to individuals in the church at Corinth.

In other lessons, we have talked about the word "sanctified", meaning set aside for God's purpose. Another meaning is to make holy. Notice how they are made holy. It is in Christ Jesus. The word "Saints" means sacred, blameless or religious. Saints are all, in every place, who call upon the name of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 1:3 "Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and [from] the Lord Jesus Christ."

Grace is one word that is hard to explain, because it is so all forgiving. It means unmerited favor. The grace of God toward man is unexplainable. It is love to the utmost, and I might add, undeserved love.

The grace of God toward man brings great peace because of God's saving grace. The only way to know real peace is in the Lord Jesus. I will just mention in passing, that the Father and Jesus are spoken of separately. Lord Jesus Christ is the true name of Jesus on the earth. Jesus means Savior and Christ means the Anointed One. When you couple that with Lord, you have said a lot. All agree, who are not even Christians that He was the Anointed One. They cannot deny the miracles. The next step is accepting Him as your Savior. The ultimate is when you know Him as your Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:4 "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;"

Paul uses this greeting in all of his letters.

Paul feels very grateful to God for the church He allowed him to begin here in Corinth. These people, even though they were sinners, were very receptive to the message God had given them

through Paul. Paul was always careful to give whatever thanks there was to God. We will find that people who are caught up in sin, and know they are, are easier to reach for God than the educated who want to analyze everything. This is why the Lord Jesus said that harlots and publicans would go into the kingdom quicker than the religious.

Matthew 21:31-32 "Whether of them twain did the will of [his] father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen [it], repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

The self-righteous did not even know they needed to repent. The harlots and publicans knew they had sinned, and asked and got forgiveness for their sin.

Note that (in Matt. 21:31), what they are speaking of. This is not the prodigal son (of Luke 15:11), but the parable of the two sons, one who said he would work in the vineyard but didn't and the other who at first said no but then repented and went.

1 Corinthians 1:5 "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and [in] all knowledge;"

In the present, the believer has everything the Lord has to give and, therefore, everything he needs. The two particular blessings spoken of here, are related to presenting the truth of God's Word.

The only knowledge worth having is that which the Lord sends to us through His Word and is explained to us by His Holy Spirit. We explained that knowledge is accumulated learning. That is the reason it is so important to study the Bible every day.

Utterance: Regarding speaking for God, believers are able to speak when God wants them to because of His enablement. Prayer reaches out for that ability, and diligence in the study of God's Word aids it.

1 Corinthians 1:6 "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:"

This is a reference to the moment of salvation when the gospel was heard and believed and settled in the heart. At that moment, the enabling of (verse 4) took place, because the individual became a recipient of the grace of God.

1 Corinthians 1:7 "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:"

This is speaking of the ability to minister in a given area. The fivefold ministry of the church was active here. They were not just sitting around waiting for the coming of the Lord, but were using the gifts of the Spirit that the Lord had given them to help them minister.

“Gift” in Greek is specifically “a gift of grace.” While the blessings of speech and knowledge were primarily for evangelizing the lost, the spiritual gifts (chapters 12-14), edify the church. Because these gifts are given to each believer (12:11-12), without regard for maturity or spirituality, the Corinthians, though sinful, had them in full.

Coming or “Revelation” of Christ: Paul looks to the blessing of future grace. At the Lord’s second coming, His full glory, honor, and majesty will be revealed in blazing splendor (Rev. 4:11; 5:12), at which time all true believers will be fixed solidly forever as holy and without sin, in full resurrected glory and purity, to live in heaven with God forever.

1 Corinthians 1:8 "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, [that ye may be] blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is referring to the coming of the Lord for His church, or the Rapture. Not the Day of the Lord which is a term referring to judgment on the ungodly.

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God”. This is speaking of the fact that the penalty for their sin had already been paid by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, they could come boldly before the throne of God, and they would be just as if they had never sinned. They are blameless, because they are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The day, spoken of here, is judgment day, when we all stand before the Lord to be judged. He will find us not guilty of any sin, if we are His.

1 Corinthians 1:9 "God [is] faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

God is faithful: Because of God’s sovereign and unchangeable promise, believers are assured of this grace; past, present and future, and will remain saved, assured of future glory at Christ’s appearing.

I believe the important word in the Scripture above is fellowship. There are three Scriptures in 1 John that can say this much better than I can.

1 John 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:6 "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:"

1 John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We see a closeness here with the Lord Jesus. Fellowship, in the verse above, means union. God is faithful and will do everything He promised to do. Many are called, but few are chosen. In fact, all are called, but only those who receive Jesus as Savior and Lord are chosen.

1 Corinthians 1:10 "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and [that] there be no divisions among you; but [that] ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

We are told that on the day of Pentecost, when the wind of the Spirit came, they are of one accord. Paul has begun to show them of the error in their church. First of all, he explains that they must be together, that division is not what God would have. If they are truly in Christ Jesus, then they would be one in Him. Paul is explaining to them that there is one message from God that saved them, and they must stick with that message.

We have discussed how many times people will hang on to one or two of their habits sometimes when they come to Christianity, and will try to teach that along with Christianity. This is the way false doctrines come into the church. In our day, it is how Christian rock crept into our churches. Even Paul, unwillingly taught things that were a leftover from his teachings by Gamaliel. It is hard to unlearn some things.

1 Corinthians 1:11 "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them [which are of the house] of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."

Chloe was probably a prominent person in the Corinthian church who had written or come to visit Paul in Ephesus to tell him of the factions in the church. It is not known whether Chloe was a man or a woman.

We see from this there are divisions in the church Paul had established in Corinth. Contentions here, means quarrels. This is still going on today.

1 Corinthians 1:12 "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."

Strangely enough this is still going on today in the form of denominations. Some will say I am a Baptist, others say I am a Methodist, others will say I am a Christian. We must be careful not to be a Baptist Christian. We must be a Christian Baptist, if Baptist is our choice of denomination to join. I could have said that of all denominations, not just the Baptist. We must always remember that, we are first a follower of and a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then join whatever denomination best takes care of our needs. We do not join Jesus like you would a club. Christianity is a family. If we are believers in Christ, we are all born into Him. We have a tendency, like these people here, to relate our Christianity to the one who led us to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:13 "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

No human leader, not even an apostle, should be given the loyalty that belongs only to the Lord. Such elevation of leaders leads only to contention, disputes, and a divided church.

Christ is not divided and neither is His body, the church. Paul depreciates his worth in comparison to the Lord Jesus so the answer to this is definitely no! Christ is not divided, then or now.

The message is Christ and Him crucified. Even if Paul, or anyone else other than Jesus had been crucified for you, that would not save you. The only salvation that is real and able to save you, is the salvation the Lord Jesus paid for with His precious spotless blood. Only His blood cleanses from all sin.

1 Corinthians 1:14-15 "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;" "Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name."

We see that Paul did not want them to think of him as Christ. Had they been baptized by him; he is afraid some might confuse that with him being their Savior. Paul is very aware of the dangerous effect it would have if he allowed anyone to worship him.

“Crispus” was the leader of the synagogue in Corinth, who was converted under Paul’s preaching (Acts 18:8).

“Gaius”: Since Romans was written from Corinth, this man was probably the host referred to (in Romans 16:23a). “Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you.” His full name was most likely “Gaius Titius Justus” and the whole church or congregation met in his house.

1 Corinthians 1:16-17 "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect."

Nothing is known of this family.

Paul preached the gospel and set up churches where he went. His primary goal was to set up churches complete with believers who would continue to teach the gospel to those he had given the gospel to. Others who were given that responsibility did the baptizing.

Actually, just baptizing someone does not save them. They must hear the message of God and be convicted in their heart. They must repent of their sins and receive their forgiveness. The preaching of the cross of Christ is what saves people. When we are convinced in our heart that Jesus did this for us, and we accept Him as our Substitute for our sin, we will be saved. Salvation comes from believing Jesus in our heart and confessing this with our mouth. (Romans 10:9-10), are the real way to receive the salvation provided for us as a free gift from God.

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Questions

1. When was the church at Corinth established?

2. How large was Corinth at this time?
3. What seaport city was a suburb of Corinth?
4. What was the most prominent of the false worship in Corinth?
5. How many prostitutes worked in this false religion at that time?
6. What was their governmental way of life?
7. Why was it easy for Paul to be heard the first time here?
8. What type of doctrine had been established, before the founding of the church at Corinth?
9. Who is Paul?
10. His _____ name was Saul?
11. What was his Roman name?
12. What did the 2 names mean?
13. What was Paul practicing, when he persecuted the Christians?
14. What caused Paul to come to Christianity?
15. Whose will was it for Paul to be an apostle?
16. What does the word "apostle" mean?
17. Who had been Paul's teacher?
18. Who sent Paul on the missionary journey to Corinth?
19. What does Sosthenes mean?
20. Who was he?
21. What makes us believe he converted to Christianity?
22. What does sanctified mean?
23. How are they made holy?
24. What does saints mean?
25. Who are the saints?
26. What is grace?

27. What does Lord Jesus Christ mean?
28. What is the ultimate in Christianity?
29. In Matthew, we read that the _____ and _____ will come to God before these self-righteous, religious people.
30. What are they made rich in, in verse 5?
31. What is knowledge?
32. What is the testimony of Christ?
33. Why will the Christians be blameless?
34. What does fellowship mean?
35. What reprimand did Paul give to this church at Corinth?
36. Who reported to Paul of the problems in the church?
37. What message for the churches today can we get out of verse 12, here?
38. Was Paul crucified for you? Who was.
39. Who were the only ones Paul had baptized?
40. Why did Paul not want to personally baptize them?
41. How does salvation come?