

Exegetical Notes – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

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Introduction: The Church in Corinth was founded by the Apostle Paul on his first missionary journey sometime around 50 A.D. As was his custom, Paul began his work in the synagogue in Corinth preaching the Gospel to the Jews who gathered there for study. But the Jews in Corinth were not open to the Gospel message. They closed the synagogue to him. He moved his meeting to the house of Titius Justus in Corinth (see Acts 18:1-17). Titius Justus was a “God Fearer,” a Greek who believed in YHWH, the god of the Jews, but who had not converted officially to Judaism. Crispus, who was a leader in the synagogue in Corinth, believed in Jesus and joined Paul. So those who were the first members of that congregation were diverse. Some had a full knowledge of the teaching of the Old Testament and its moral law. Some were Greeks and did not have any founding in Judaism.

Corinth was a Greek city. It was large and prosperous, and it was known throughout the world as morally corrupt. The temple of Aphrodite in Corinth boasted 1000 priestess/prostitutes. To be called a Corinthian was to be called sexually immoral. Every form of sexually immoral practices was found in Corinth. The attitudes prevalent in the culture were present in the church then as they are today. Charles Ryrie explains the consequences this way. “Aberrant beliefs and practices of an astonishing variety characterized this church.”

Paul pastored the Corinthian Church for 18 months. The words of 1 & 2 Corinthians are part of pastoral letters which Paul wrote to the congregation after having left.

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Verses 1-3

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Unlike an English letter, where the sender is identified at the end by his/her signature, in Paul's letter the sender of the letter was identified at its beginning. Paul identifies himself by his first name and his office in the Church. He does mention that he was the founding pastor of the Corinthian Church, which he was, nor that he had personal friends among the members of that congregation. He is simply Paul. This indicates that he was well known among the Corinthian Christians and that his office in the Church is Apostle.
- He speaks to the Corinthians "ex-officio," "out of his office," as an apostle. There were only a few men who could claim this office. It was the highest office in the church. It was reserved for those few who had been with Jesus when he was here on earth and who had, therefore, become Christians directly through the teaching of Jesus. Though Paul had not been numbered among the first twelve men that Jesus called, he claimed that he had been with Jesus on earth. While the other Apostles did not dispute that Paul was an Apostle, many in Corinth did, as we shall see. It is his office which gives Paul his right to speak to the Corinthians about the issues which follow in this letter. Paul claims that he was appointed to this office by Jesus Christ, himself.
- Today, the office of Apostle is closed. The highest office in the Church today is the office of Elder.
- Sosthenes was with Paul as he wrote this letter. He may have been acting as Paul's secretary. About him nothing more is known.
- The letter is specifically addressed to the Corinthian Church, but the address implies that it can be shared with the Christian Church in every place as helpful teaching.

Verses 4-9

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— ⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Paul gives thanks to God for those to whom he writes because God has blessed them with salvation through His grace. This grace is God's gift to all who believe in Jesus and comes to them through Him, not because they deserve it. They are, therefore, enriched by their relationship to God through Jesus Christ. Their salvation is confirmed by their behavior. They do not act like Corinthians! They have a "Christocentric World View." It shows in the things they say and do and in what they know and believe. However, as we shall see in this study, they are not perfect in their behavior. It is the change in their behavior, that they no longer live as do those who live in the world, which shows that they belong to Jesus (see James 1:22-25).
- "Therefore," because of God's grace given through Jesus Christ, the Corinthians lack no "spiritual gift" (see Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-14, Ephesians 4:7-16). Spiritual Gifts are abilities given to Christians to enable the ministry of the Church. God has gifted the Church through the distribution of Spiritual Gifts so that the Church can do what he has called it to do. This is true of THE CHURCH and of each local church. All the gifts we need to do what God has called us to do, He has given.
- God is the source of strength and power. He enables the Church in every age. He will keep us strong. We are not strong in ourselves. The Corinthian Church is a picture of weakness. We are strong in GOD! The Church must trust God and God alone. Any church which leans on its own strength will falter and fail. This is why the Church is weak.
- Jesus is faithful. The Church can trust him. He will keep all his promises.

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