

1Cor 1:1-9

September 16, 2018

Background

Overview

The church at Corinth was founded by Paul, as recorded in Acts 18. It had enjoyed the ministries of Paul, Peter, and Apollos and factions had arisen around these personalities. Other carnalities such as immorality, idolatry, and heresy had arisen. Thus Paul wrote this first epistle to reprove the Corinthians of these and to correct disorder concerning the Lord's Table, spiritual gifts, and the collection. He also answered questions and clarified misunderstanding concerning the resurrection. All these things are evidence of a lack of spirituality, the essence of which is love.

The City of Corinth

Corinth was in Greece, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, the third largest city in the Roman Empire. Corinth's location made it one of the richest cities of the Roman Empire. It was ideally located on the most important travel route from east to west. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, a center for commerce, trade and transportation, having a bustling port.

Objects of luxury found their way to the markets which were visited by every nation in the civilized world - Arabian balsam, Phoenician dates, Libyan ivory, Babylonian carpets, Cilician goats' hair, Lycaonian wool, Phrygian slaves.

Corinth was multiethnic, made up of Greeks, Romans, and Jews. It had a mixture of social classes including rich, poor, and slave. Corinth became famous for its culture, arts and crafts. It was invaded by all kinds of religions and philosophies.

Corinth was the headquarters for the worship of Venus and for some of the mystery cults from Egypt and Asia. It had two patron deities Poseidon, the god of the sea; and Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love. The temple was central to the worship of Aphrodite.

It boasted one thousand female prostitutes available to the people of the city and to all the visitors. Most of these women were famous for their great beauty. The income of the temple prostitutes provided a major source of the city's income. This practice, coupled with the looseness often characteristic of a port city of a mixed and transient population, gave Corinth a reputation far beyond the cities of its day.

To demonstrate this fact, the Greeks invented a term, to Corinthianize, which meant to live an immoral life. To call a young woman "a Corinthian" meant she was an immoral person.

Corinth became not only a synonym for wealth and luxury, drunkenness and debauchery, but also for filth.

The Church

Paul visited Corinth (after he had met with seeming failure in cultured Athens) and founded the Corinthian church during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17).

He made friends with two Jewish tent-makers, Aquila and Priscilla, and stayed in Corinth for a year and a half. He reasoned with Jews in the synagogue week after week, and Silas and Timothy joined him after they had completed their ministry in Berea. The ruler of the synagogue was converted and baptized by Paul (Ac 18:8, 1Cor 1:14-16). Christ gave Paul special encouragement to stay in Corinth (Ac 18:9); after a year and a half, he departed for Ephesus. He left behind a church richly gifted in spiritual things (1Cor 1:4-7), but sorely tempted by the worldly wisdom and the wickedness of the city itself.

As he moved on with his missionary activity, he spent three years in Ephesus (Ac 20:31). While he was there, he heard that things were not going well in Corinth, serious problems developed in the church.

Paul had written an earlier letter (now lost) to the Corinthians, to try to straighten things out (1Cor 5:9), but it did not solve the problem, so he wrote what we call 1 Corinthians and sent it with his associate Timothy (1Cor 4:17).

He heard that the church was divided (1Cor 1:11), and then a delegation from the church arrived in Ephesus with a letter asking Paul's help regarding specific questions. First Corinthians was his response.

Purpose

The church at Corinth was founded by Paul. It had enjoyed the ministries of Paul, Peter, and Apollos, factions had risen around these personalities. Other carnalities had arisen such as immorality, idolatry, and heresy. Thus, Paul wrote this first epistle to correct disorder concerning:

division in the body of Christ (1:11 - 3:4), how to respond to sin of fellow Christians (5:1-13), with matters of marriage and sexual sins (7:1-40), with disputes about food (8:1-11:1), communion (10:14-22), with the use of spiritual gifts (12 - 14), and to clarify misunderstanding concerning the resurrection.

All these things are evidence of a lack of maturity, the essence of which is love (13:1-13).

Many of the problems Paul addresses come from the Corinthian Christians' tendency to reflect the values of their city rather than those of the body of Christ.

The difficulty of letters

A letter is one of the two sides of a dialogue, to read a letter is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. When we read the letters of Paul we are often in difficulty, because we do not possess the letter which he was answering. We do not know fully the circumstances with which he was dealing with, it is only from the letter itself that we can de the situation.

Their Standing in Christ - 1Cor 1:1-3

1Cor 1:1-3 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The **name of Jesus Christ occurs 10 times** in the first ten verses of 1Cor.

The letter is **addressed to "the church of God at Corinth"**, and not the church of Corinth.

Paul sought to deal with the issues in the light of the Cross and love of Christ.

Paul reminds them of who they are:

- 1) **have been sanctified** = to set a place apart for God, to make it holy by the offering of the sacrifice upon it. To be a Christian is to be one for whom Christ died, to know it and to realize that this sacrifice makes us belong to God. We have been consecrated to God by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- 2) **saints** (by calling)
this Greek word describes a thing or person that has been devoted to the possession and the service of God. Paul uses this word to mean that the Christian is different from other people because they belong to God (1Cor 6:11; Heb 10:10, 14; 1 Pt 1:2), and His service.
- 3) part of the **universal church** (with all, in every place, call on the name of Jesus)
- 4) having **Jesus Christ as their Lord**
- 5) **having God as their Father**
- 6) recipients of the **grace of God**
Grace means that God gives us what we don't deserve; mercy means He doesn't give us what we do deserve.

Paul tells us how we should think of the church

The church belongs to God (1:2).

The church is a family (we are brothers and sisters) of believers (1:3).

The is only one church, made up of all believers throughout all places, (1:2).

Prayer and Thanksgiving - 1Cor 1:4-9

1Cor 1:4-9 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul thanks God for their reception of the gospel.

“the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you”

When Paul preached Christianity to the Corinthians he told them that Christ could do certain things for them, and now he proudly claims that all that he pledged that Christ could do has come true.

Paul thanks God that they were not lacking in any gift.

Salvation is the gift of God. It is something which a man can never achieve himself, it is unearned, it comes from the generosity of the love of God (2Cor 9:15).

Rom 6:23 ... the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;

God gives spiritual gifts to each member of His body.

1Pt 4:10 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1Cor 12:4-10; 1Tim 4:14)

Paul thanks God for God’s faithfulness (1Jn 1:9; 2Tim 2:13).

Phil 1:6 ... He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

1Thes 5:24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”

This was a familiar phrase in the **Old Testament**. It was the day when the Jews expected God to break directly into history, the old world would be wiped out and the New World would be born, the day when all men would be judged.

In the **New Testament** it is regarded as the day in which Jesus will come back in all His power and glory (Lk 17:24; 1 Co 5:5; 2Cor 1:14; Phil 1:10; 2:16; 1Thes 5:2; 2Pt 3:10).

We are called into fellowship with God

“koinonia” = fellowship with, participation, communion, communication

2Cor 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Phil 2:1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

Phil 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;

1Jn 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1Jn 1:3-7)

References used:

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