

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

Intro:

--We are told of Paul's arrival in Corinth in Acts 18. He gets there alone but is soon joined by Timothy and Silas. It is also there in Corinth that he meets Aquila and Priscilla who become lifelong friends and partners in the gospel.

--Now, Corinth no doubt drew Paul because it was a seat of Roman government and Greek commerce. It was a large city (some guess 200,00 freeman and 400,00 slaves!) with people moving in and out constantly and no doubt this attracted Paul as a strategic location for the spread of the gospel.

--It was also in many ways the "Vanity Fair" or Vegas of the Roman Empire. To be a "Corinthian" was synonymous with scandalous living.

--In terms of timelines it seems like Paul plants the church and then a few years later writes them a letter—which we don't have—from Ephesus (5:9). That letter seems to be misunderstood on some levels and three men from the church (16:15-17) bring a response that isn't great. Also, there is an oral report from the household of Chloe (1:11; 5:1) which isn't exactly glowing.

--What we see is a church in conflict with heathenism! The world having so influenced them that they are still carnal babes in Christ. List of issues:

- 1) Divisions in the church
- 2) Reliance on worldly wisdom
- 3) Carnality
- 4) Unspiritual judgment
- 5) Spiritual pride
- 6) Sexual immorality
- 7) Church discipline
- 8) Suing one another
- 9) Marriage and divorce
- 10) Things offered to idols and matters of conscience
- 11) Self-denial
- 12) Temptation
- 13) Idolatry
- 14) Head coverings
- 15) Communion
- 16) Spiritual gifts
- 17) Love
- 18) Church order
- 19) Resurrection
- 20) Baptism

--Still, despite all of that, they were truly God's children!

Acts 18:9-11: Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Verse 1:

--Here Paul introduces himself and acknowledges his apostleship in Christ Jesus as one *called* with divine purpose and authority. He didn't have to stress his apostleship in all his epistles but here he must as we will see in chapter 9 his apostleship is under attack.

--To question Paul's apostleship was to question God not Paul. I also find it interesting that Paul simply states this when he could have easily told incredible and miraculous stories to "validate" himself! *The light, vision, voice, scales, etc. . .*

--Paul also introduces Sosthenes *the brother*. This may be the same man that is mentioned in **Acts 18:17**.

Verse 2:

--Paul is writing to them as the church *of God*—as His belonging bought in His blood—in Corinth.

--And, despite their issues, he reminds them that they are called out, sanctified, and saints! They are forgiven from "sin" but also delivered from "sins". This was true of them despite the fact that they looked more like ungodly Corinth than saints in Corinth.

--And, this was to be true of anyone who calls on the name of Jesus Christ our common Lord. So the letter was no doubt to be read in the fellowships in the surrounding provinces.

Verse 3:

--This was Paul's common greeting but it was more than mere words for him. No doubt it brought him back to the joy of his salvation. He never knew peace with God until he knew the grace of God in his life.

Morgan (Letters to the Corinthians): "Grace is ultimately the activity of God which puts at the disposal of sinning men and women all the things that give delight to Him."

--Paul is reminding them that grace and peace are already theirs in Christ Jesus.

Verses 4-7:

--Paul was always thankful to God for certain things about believers. They were prideful about a lot of what they had but Paul reminds them that all they had was by the grace of God, given by Christ Jesus, an enrichment from Him, and only the beginning of what would still one day come.

--Paul was always honest with his commendations. He is thankful for:

- 1) Their rich Biblical knowledge and speech
- 2) Their confirmed spiritual life
- 3) They possessed an expression of all spiritual gifts
- 4) They were truly waiting for Christ

--How can these things be present as well as all the problematic issues? Because inconsistency is what immaturity looks like! We just get confused because we think people who express these things must be mature in Christ.

1) It is not always true that just because people know the Bible or theology it must make them spiritual. (Think of Karl Barth + Paul Tillich who are famous for theology and blatant adultery!)

2) We also think if people are they really saved and have a changed life they must be mature—but the reality is that the new birth is the beginning of spiritual life not the end!

3) We also think if people express spiritual gifts like tongues or miracles they must be great holy figures but think about—Samson, Balaam, Lonnie Frisbee, and this very Corinthian church!

4) We can also think that if people are really excited about prophecy they must really want to obey God here and now. But is that always true? Would they truly like it if His kingdom came and His will was done in their life immediately?

--So Paul's commendations are honest but so are his rebukes and corrections! They were to keep all these things but add to them Christ-likeness and obedience and love!

Verse 8:

--Paul's hope is that the God who started this work in them would finish it. That in the end, they would be blameless in the **day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. *God wants progress not perfection for His children in this life! Perfection is His gracious gift to give in the next.*

Verse 9:

--I see this as Paul's hope. Jesus Himself appeared to him and called these carnal Corinthian babes *His people*.

--It is because of God's faithfulness that you and I will be kept in this fellowship with Jesus Christ. If we close the door on Him in some area of our life He will stand at that door and knock! He will never leave us nor forsake us.

--We have been called into **fellowship** with Jesus Christ—into *koinonia*—which gives the idea of: *becoming partners with, partakers with, and having all in common with*.

--The church is those that truly have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—a crowd of individuals who all personally share in something. We are connected to Him and He is connected to us. We too walk with Him like those early disciples!

--What does that look like? Mutual interests, devotion, activity, and end goals! It's all about a life of fellowship with Jesus!

--Take note that Paul mentions Jesus Christ ten times in the first ten verses (If you count the **Him** then that is eleven)! Paul is very concerned about Christ being central.

Verse 10:

--Now Paul begins to address some of the issues. The first thing he wants to point out is their division! He begs them to be united out of respect for Christ—not himself!

--The word for **divisions** has the idea of *tears or rips*.

--The word of **joined** means to *unite or repair or mend*.

--How can this happen? If they think about things and judge things with the mind of Christ!

--Paul is going to speak shortly about their problem in leaning on worldly wisdom. Their divisions and quarrels over the wisdom of specific “leaders or teachers” really just ministered to their own pride!

--There is absolutely no indication that these leaders themselves were at odds. In fact, we see the opposite. Paul is going to make the point whatever was good in them was of Christ anyway. So to claim them—or their particular wisdom as their own over others—was foolish pride on their part and evidence they were not seeing and judging things as Christ does.

Verse 11:

--These divisions of course caused quarrels or fights.

--Notice as well, Paul openly names Chloe and her household as those that brought these issues to his attention. What a simple verse that has been so instructive for me!

--There are some, who in their sin, don’t like it when things are brought to the church or to spiritual authority. That is what the Bible commands us to do. ***Matthew 18***

--This is the way it is supposed to be and things would be much better in the body of Christ if it was done so!

Luke 17:3: Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

--Let us love one another with the courage and honesty of a Chloe and her house. I have learned the best thing is just to speak plainly—speak the truth in love.

Verses 12-13:

--We are not sure what the particular division were but people guess: Paul (Gentiles); Apollos (Greeks as scholar and eloquent); Peter (Jews); Jesus (the one-uppers!).

--We cannot claim Christ and write off those that He makes His own and connects us to for all eternity! Christ is not divided.

--It is wonderful to have spiritual mentors and examples but respecting of persons is a sin.

--This is important because it has never been easier to stack up servants of Christ against servants of Christ for our own pride and purposes!

3:21-22: Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Verses 14-17:

--Paul names just a few—most likely early converts—that he personally baptized and says that he was happy he hadn't baptized more of they would divide over that as well! *Hasn't the church done so over baptism from then until today?!*

--Paul could have never said these things if baptismal regeneration was true. It is obvious that he does not understand baptism to *effect* salvation. It comes *after* salvation.

--Finally, Paul makes it clear that he purposefully didn't come to them with **wisdom of words**—specific names, phrases, emphasis that divided—but with the simple cross of Christ.