

# LESSON 1

## (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

### INTRODUCTION

*1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours;*

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

*4 I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge – 6 even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you – 7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

V.1 – **Paul** – The author of the epistle. The book was written to the Corinthians probably from Ephesus (or Asia Minor) on the third missionary journey. Paul spent some time in Ephesus, Acts 19, and would have reasonable access to information from Corinth. The date of writing; somewhere between A.D. 55-58. Since the second letter seemingly follows Paul's departure from Ephesus (Acts 19) and was written soon after the first one, the probable date is the Summer of Fall of A.D. 57. Spring of A.D. 58 finds him going to Jerusalem, Acts 20. The rulers Felix and Festus appeared while Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea for two years. These men set the time about A.D. 60. Reasoning back puts the letter in the time slot suggested above.

**Called** -- This word may mean 1) invited (the chosen) 2) named or 3) a response (He called me on the phone). In Paul's case, God both invited and designated Paul to be one of the special messengers of Christ Jesus. (Note v. 17, where Paul states that Christ sent him.) As such Paul assumed nothing that God did not give him. He argues at length in II Cor. 10-13 on this point, since some in Corinth questioned his position. The first four chapters in our epistle approach this issue from various angles, but the conclusion is this: Paul considered himself one of those chosen to reveal God's mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world, Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 1:1-14, 3:1-11.

**Sosthenes** -- In Luke's history, Acts 18, the Jews in Achaia brought Paul before the proconsul Gallio. Gallio refused to hear their case against Paul and dismissed it. Maddened by their public defeat, they turned their hatred upon Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler. We know not if that man and the one Paul mentions are one and the same. Perhaps he, like Crispus before him, allowed the Old Covenant to lead him to Christ. At any rate, Paul calls him a brother.

V. 2 -- **The church of God at Corinth** -- Whatever else might have been true, and irrespective of the problems so evident, those whom Paul addressed were God's own people, saved by grace through faith, set apart unto good works, I Peter 2:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10.

There are several terms in the New Covenant scriptures applied to the body of the saved. The most common one is the church of God. Some times the location is specified as here, or in Revelations Chs. 2 and 3, or just simply "the church" is used. God seeming did not specify one and only one designation for his people, either collectively or individually. Note these terms: saints, brethren, Christians, disciples, etc. Let us learn to be at least as open in our thinking as God was in his revelation to us.

**to those sanctified in Christ Jesus** -- Hebrews 2:11 identifies Jesus as the agent of sanctification for every child of God. That ext also show that the process is continuous (see the remarks on 1:18), saints are being sanctified. We want to remember that the Greek term *hagiadz\_*

is also translated 'to make holy' or a similar expression. God is at work in us, Phil. 2:13, to work and to will His good pleasure. Part of God's will for each of us is to eliminate the evil and make us more holy. See here the text in II Cor. 6:14 - 7:1. So the process of being sanctified is life-long.

**All those in every place** -- Any person in Christ is a part of God's people; fellowship in Christ is instant and automatic. Christians often are slow to recognize that being in Christ is being in a very large body, all over the earth, with God saving and using all.

**Grace** -- A common greeting in those days, whether among Christians or not. Of course, grace has a deep and wonderful meaning for Christians. It conveys the love of God and provides access to him, for instance. Note these text: John 1:14, 16, 17; Acts 4:23; 11:23; 20:24; Rom. 3:24; 5:2 II Cor. 6:1; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 1:7; 3:2; Tit. 2:11; 3:7; Heb. 2:9; 4:16; Jam. 4:6; I Pet. 3:7; 4:10; II Pet. 3:18.

**Peace** -- Also a common greeting, and especially among the Jewish people. The English spelling "saalem" represents the Hebrew word (as in Jerusalem, or Absalom) while Irene represents the Greek term. Some texts of note might be: Mt. 10:13, 34; Mk. 1:25; 4:39; Lk. 1:79; 2:14; 7:50; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; Acts 10:36; 18:9; Rom. 2:10; 3:17; 8:6; 14:17; Eph. 2:14; Phil. 4:7; Col. 3:15; Heb. 12:14.

V. 4 -- **I give thanks** -- A thankful spirit does not come naturally; it must be cultivated. Only God can create in us a spirit that is able to rejoice with thanksgiving in all circumstances, for only he can work all things together for good, Rom. 8:28; Eccles. 7:14.

Paul, despite their varied problems, and the opposition of some, yet thanked God for them. See this great virtue expressed in Rom. 1:8; Col. 1:3; II Thess. 1:3; etc. Notice that he finds their faith and God's grace in them occasions for joy. The root of the Greek term is also in the word for grace, v. 3.

V. 5 -- **enriched in every way** -- Speech and knowledge were two of the ways. Ch. 12 lists others. The gift of salvation was the gift that enriched them beyond measure. "How rich I am since Jesus came my way!"

The evident problem with God's blessings to them was their attitude about those blessings. It may well be so with us, too. Often we need to permit God to create within us a "clean heart and a right spirit," as did the Psalmist, 51:10.

**Speech** -- Translates the common word *logos*, which can be seen in all sorts of contexts, such as Lk. 16:2; Jn. 1:1; Acts 2:41; Rom. 13:9; I Cor. 1:18; etc. For some of the Corinthians, this blessing proved too much to handle; and they evidently became enamored with oratory, or the ability to speak, etc.

**knowledge** -- The Greek term is *gnosis*, seen in knowledge or gnostic. Verse 18 seems to equate knowledge with wisdom. While a blessing from God, it also could prove bad, 8:1, if not properly appreciated.

Some of the brethren gloried in the gifts rather than the God who gave them, and in Christ who would be served with such gifts. They failed to use their wisdom to see their foolishness. This theme of wisdom/foolly is sort of an undertone throughout the whole book, as Paul develops the various matters.

V. 6 -- **testimony** -- The Greek term is normally translated as witness or as martyr.

**confirmed** -- Established, made certain or sustain as in v. 8. Consider here I Cor. 15:1-4, which develops the idea the gospel is the solid rock upon which the redeemed may stand secure, and which Paul had preached among them. However, we should keep aware of the point that some promises of God are conditional. See the whole context of Deut. Chs. 27-30 for an example.

V. 7 -- **you are lacking** -- They were not "shorted" by God who enriched them, v. 5. In fact, they were too immature at times to handle aright all that God gave.

**spiritual gift** -- There is and has been much confusion about this term. We hear it today in "charismatic" or "Charisma" usually. The Greek term has the same root as grace in v. 3, or thanks in v. 4. It does not carry the connotation of a gift that is special or spiritual, necessarily. It

simply means “gift” unless context demands another choice. The noun form in our text occurs in Rom. 1:11; 5:15, 16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6; I Cor. 7:7; 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; II Cor. 1:11; I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6; I Pet. 4:10. It may or may not be “spiritual” in nature as some use it.

**you wait** -- The concept in the Greek term is that of eagerness based upon a solid basis, v. 6, and producing an enduring hope that sustains, Rom. 8:24-25; I Pet. 1:3-9. The word here is also in Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; Phil. 3:20; Heb 9:28.

**revealing** -- Jesus’ second coming is in mind here. He promised to return, Jn. 14, and angels affirmed it, Acts 1. The early Christians believed it and were to so live, Rom 13:11-14; Col. 3:1-4; I Thess. 5:1-11; II Pet. 3:1-14; I Jn. 3:1-11.

The Greek term can be seen in Mt. 10:26; Lk. 2:32; 17:30; Rom. 1:17, 18; 8:19; I Cor. 3:13; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3; I Pet. 1:7, 13; 5:1.

V. 8 -- **sustain you to the end** -- The scriptures are full of the idea that God and/or Jesus will not fail us. From Genesis to Revelation those who will place their trust in God are in every way possible made aware of God’s unchanging faithfulness unto those who trust him. Space would fail to enumerate all of them. A few scriptures along this line would be E.. 19:4-6; Deut. 31:6; 33:27; Ps. 46:1; 90:1ff; 91:1-16; Mt. 28:20; Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 10:34-35; 12:25-29; James 1:17; I Pet. 1:24-25; Jude vv. 24-25. Carefully read Rom. 3:3-4 now.

3 *“What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God’s faithfulness? 4 Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written:*

*“So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge.”*

**guiltless** -- There is no blessing the equal of this one. We may be enriched in all sorts of ways, and unable to number our blessings even if we tried. We may be denied long life, good health, position, ability, food, clothing, opportunity, or any of the things counted as blessings. We may be as rich as Abraham or as poor as Lazarus. Whatever the case, nothing compares with salvation in Christ, and all that is involved therein.

The word in Greek is *anenkl\_tos* which has the idea of blameless, irreproachable, not able to be accused. It is the idea in “just-as-if-I’d-never-sinned” that comes with justification. Paul put it this way: “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” Rom. 8:1. (Check Col. 1:22; I Tim. 3:10; Tit. 1:6, 7.) Hence, when we stand as redeemed in the presence of the judge of all, the verdict will be “I find no fault in him.” Note what Paul says to those in Philippi. Phil. 1:6

V. 9 -- **God is faithful** -- Many are the attributes of God. Hee is merciful, full of grace, longsuffering, kind, love, just, good, etc.

**you were called** -- God planned for our redemption before the world was founded, Eph. 1. He extended the invitation because he loved the world, unwilling that any perish, Jn. 3:16; II Pet. 3:9. He sacrificed his only son to make us a way out of darkness into his marvelous light, and to permit us to turn from Satan to serve the living God, Acts 26:17-18; I Pet. 2:9-10. The greatest “sendoff” ever given was through love, and is found in Matt. 28:18-20.

**fellowship** -- Koinonia! A mutual sharing in Christ by members of the same body, belonging to the same head, saved in the same way, adopted y the same God. Such is the privilege of every Christian.

The Greek term *koin\_n\_a* appears lots of times. See such texts as Mt. 23:30; Lk. 5:10; Acts 2:42; Rom. 12:13; 15:26; I Cor. 10:16; II Cor. 1:7; 6:14; 8:23; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 4:15; I Tim. 5:22; 6:18; Heb. 10:33; 13:16; I Pet. 4:13; 5:1; I Jn. 1:3, 6-7; II Pet. 1:4.

One of the sad things about this epistle, and of Christendom over two thousands years, is the continuing failure to enjoy what is found in Christ, and be big enough in faith and love to minimize the differences and maximize the likenesses, to overlook failures and honor faith. As we study this book, and especially Chapters 8-14, this divisive, partisan, unchristian frame of mind will often be in view. May God grant that we become more like Him and less like we are as we study together.

## INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS

1. Outline what you can find about Paul's apostleship.
2. Make a list of the various names used to designate either church groups or individual members of Christ's body.
3. For what does Paul give thanks?
4. Did a thankful spirit come naturally or easily to you?
5. Give at least five things that are stated about God's grace.
6. How does God sustain Christians?
7. Why might God not keep His promise?
8. Does pride come too easily when we are "enriched" by God? (Read Ch. 10:12)
9. What must our attitude be about Jesus' second coming?
10. Through whom do we have access into the fellowship of God's Son?