

Sermon Notes

The Corinthian Church: Global, Grateful, & Gifted

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

January 18, 2015

Introduction & Review

Paul established the Church in Corinth, having been there—living, teaching, investing—for 18 months during his “2nd Missionary Journey” (Acts 18). He cared deeply for this congregation. In this large city, the beginnings of the church were small, and Corinth was a challenging, demanding, diverse, & dynamic city. The region was filled with issues arising from wealth and those seeking wealth; politics & religion were vibrant, and the population was diverse...a kind of “melting pot” of peoples, creeds, & languages. Although a ‘very religious’ city (at least 26 sacred places according to one ancient writer), their religions were mostly of the “you-name-it” variety; in many respects, that which was loose & for license (freedom) was the chief desire! After Paul left Corinth, problems cropped up. Paul heard about this (1:11), had written to them previously (5:9), and was now writing to them again (7:1).

There is much to learn from Paul’s interaction with the Corinthian Church. As the Scriptures have been given for our instruction (Romans 15:4), we are living in a day that (especially) needs to heed the instruction and learn from the interaction of Paul with the Corinthians. Much of what the church faced then and there, we are facing now...or will be facing.

The Start of the Letter: A Loaded Opening (1:1)

Paul—Called—Apostle—Will (of God)—Brother

This strikes right at the heart of some of the problems in the church! This is not about me, or about me inserting myself with some kind of self-promotion...and this concerns gifts, rhetoric, & the “world of wisdom.”

Paul has been informed of some of the problems which had surfaced in the Corinthian Church, and they had written to him as well, and this also caused some concern. The beginning of this letter goes right after these things, addressing matters that are causing the problems. We will focus on three things, and each will be a corrective to the problems in Corinth:

The Church is (Distinctively) Global (1:2)

The Church is much larger than Corinth! The fact that the Church is global (worldwide, universal) strikes at the selfishness and pride which is always looking to take sides. The Church in Corinth is both local and global...

Local: “To the church of God which is at Corinth...”

Global: “...with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

It is possible for a reeking partisanship to be present in particular churches, in particular church members, and even in particular groups of churches. We are part of the “catholic church” (*kata + holos* = according to the whole).

Similar to Paul’s calling and appointment is that of the Corinthians; both have been set apart by Another. The Corinthians are “sanctified” (set apart and distinct), *in Christ!* They are also those who are “called” and they are “saints” and these are amazing words when we remember that the church there was filled with problems.

Most distinctive in this is that those who belong to Jesus are those “who call on the name of Jesus Christ.” This is both distinctive (narrow) and global. These are important words for Paul to state at the beginning as those who follow Jesus do *not* call upon Poseidon, Apollo, Aphrodite, Melicertes, or Caesar.

Paul demonstrates this by using the name of Jesus 8 times in these first 9 verses.

Paul addresses a local and global church and this is also seen by his use of the words “grace” and “peace.” Grace was chiefly a Greek greeting, and peace was primarily a Hebrew (*shalom*) greeting.

Grateful for the Church in Corinth (1:4)

This also strikes at divisiveness and pride! Paul demonstrates a “positive rebuke.”

Gratitude, in Paul, is always to God.

Paul provides an example to pastors and congregations.

For *this* congregation in Corinth? For them?

The Church in Corinth is Gifted (1:4-9)

This congregation is well-equipped; they are thoroughly graced. Later (4:7), Paul will ask them, “What do you have that you did not receive?” The problem is not with God’s provision...it’s with them!

They have received grace (1:4); they were full, enriched in all speech and knowledge (1:5); they had no lack (1:6); they would be confirmed all the way to the end and be blameless (1:8); and all of this is because the Lord is faithful (1:9).

