

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Begin with God's Faithfulness 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Letter Writing in New Testament Times

1. The Signature: the name of the writer
2. The Address: the name of those the writer was addressing
3. The Salutation: the opening greeting, usually using some form of the Greek word for "rejoice" (*chairein*).
4. The Ascription of Appreciation: the declaration of appreciation or thanksgiving, which was usually addressed to a pagan deity.

Paul's Signature (1 Cor 1:1)

- Paul is the first word of this letter, followed by a brief description of himself.
- "A Called Apostle" = Paul is establishing his authority for writing a letter like this to the church at Corinth.
- "By the will of God" = Paul's apostleship was not of his own choosing. It was God who made Paul an official apostle of the NT Church.
- The office of an apostle involved the work of laying a foundation for the establishment of the Church (see 1 Cor 3:10-11; Eph 2:19-22). It was an important function that was needed during the early days of the New Testament Church.
- Paul (an apostle) and Sosthenes (a brother). In writing his letters, Paul typically associated himself with someone who would have been known to his readers and respected by them. In this case he mentions Sosthenes (see Acts 18:5-17).
- This does not mean that Sosthenes was the co-author of the letter, but that he would have lent his encouragement and support for the sending of a letter like this.

The Address (1 Cor 1:2)

Paul identifies those he addresses in three ways:

1. The assembled church in Corinth as an official organization.
 - The church (*ekklesia*) = an official assembly of the members of the organization.
 - The church of God = the church belongs to God, rather than to any man, or leader, or city.
2. The many individual people who were part of the church.
 - "Have been sanctified" (*hagiazō*) = this word means to be set apart as belonging to God or for special service to God. The perfect tense shows that their past sanctification had results which continued into the present time.
 - God sanctifies believers at the moment they put their faith in Christ for their salvation.
 - "Called Saints" = this noun comes from the same root as the word "sanctified," and it means "separated ones." They are saints by divine call and by God's work on their behalf.
 - God sees them as saints, even though they are not perfect or sinless. True "sainthood" involves being called and sanctified by the work of God, rather than by any kind of self-effort.
3. All who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Paul broadens the address to include believers in other places besides Corinth. He seems to be

aware that he is writing a letter that will have lasting significance for believers in other places (and possibly at other times).

- Those whom God calls are then able to call upon God!
"Calling upon the name of the Lord" certainly indicates the act of expressing saving faith (see Acts 9:14, 21; Rom 10:12-13). It can probably be broadened to include prayer and worship, which should also characterize the life of a Christian.

The Salutation (1 Cor 1:3)

- In NT times this was often expressed using a form of the word to rejoice (*chairein*) = "May you be glad"
- In Paul's letters he modifies the typical Greek salutation and combines it with the common Hebrew greeting ("*shalom*," peace). Paul uses a form of the word *chairein* (*charis*, grace) because of its Christian connotation of the grace of God.
- The source of this grace and peace is "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Paul always puts God the Father and God the Son on an equal plane of deity in all of his letters.

The Ascription of Appreciation (1 Cor 1:4-9)

- In ancient letters the writer would tell something about the readers for which he was grateful. This ascription would often be directed to a pagan deity.

Paul expresses his thankfulness for God's blessings to them in the past (1 Cor 1:4-6)

1. Grace was given to them = Paul describes their initial salvation experience when he first shared the gospel with them and they received the saving grace of God.
2. They were enriched with many spiritual gifts. The Corinthian church seemed to be characterized especially by the gifts of speech and knowledge. The misuse of these gifts was causing many problems in the church (see 1 Cor 12-14).
3. The testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in them. When Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth, its truth was confirmed by the powerful activity of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 2:4).

Paul expresses his thankfulness for the hope of future blessings (1 Cor 1:7-9)

1. They were eagerly awaiting the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ in the future.
 - He uses the word *apekdechomai* (intensified expectation) to express their attitude of hope for this future event.
 - The revelation (*apokalupsis*) points to the future time when Christ will return from heaven to receive His own at the resurrection of Church-age saints (the Rapture). In Titus 2:13 Paul calls this event the "blessed hope" of the Church.
2. Paul is thankful that God will confirm them to the end. "To the end" may indicate:
 - Degree = God will confirm them to the fullest extent possible.
 - Time = God will confirm them until the time of the revelation of Christ.
 Either would make sense in this context, because the result will be that they will stand blameless (degree) before the Lord at His coming (time).
 - "Blameless" (*anegkletos*) means they cannot be accused of any wrongdoing in a court of law; no charge can be brought against them. This certainly does not mean they were sinless or perfect -- we know that the Corinthian believers were far from perfect.
 - This presents another aspect of the work of God on their behalf. Christ accomplished their justification, and there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ (see Rom 8:1).
3. God is faithful, and He will ensure their calling to the end.
 - God will be faithful to do what He promised to do!

- Paul's confidence for their future does not rest on the faithfulness of the Corinthian believers. Their present condition is shameful. Paul's confidence rests on the faithfulness of God alone. God called them and sanctified them, and He will finish His work in them until they stand before the Lord Jesus Christ on that blessed day.

Paul focuses on God's Faithfulness to do what He promised

- The "Lordship of Christ" is an important theme in these opening verses.
- Paul puts God in the spotlight -- it is the power and majesty and faithfulness of God that will accomplish what must be done in the lives of the Corinthian believers.

Points of Application

- Just as the believers in Corinth were called and sanctified, we too should understand what our own calling and sanctification means.
- Just as they were enriched by God, God has also given us so many riches and privileges.
- Just as they were eagerly awaiting the return of the Lord, we too should have the eager expectation and hope of His coming. It could happen today!
- In view of all that God has done for us, how should we respond? How should we live our lives as a result?

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Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)