

Pentwater Bible Church

I Corinthians; Message #2

The Church of God Which is at Corinth

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I Corinthians 1:2

I Corinthians 1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's:

The Church is an institution, which belongs to God. It does not belong to any man, organization, denomination or seminary. It simply is His. People who become believers, that is, they are “born again” belong to God and have been “sanctified in Christ Jesus.” (I Cor 1:30; I Thessalonians 4:3; 4:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; I Pet 1:2) And as sanctified they are “set apart” for a special work which the Holy Spirit imparts as gifts at the point of belief. Paul calls them Spiritual gifts. Paul will through this book show us how to bring the use of these gifts in close alignment with God’s desire for us while we are in the world.

Paul then makes a reference to true believers as *saints*. We must keep in mind that there are Old Testament Saints as well as New Testament Saints. A saint is simply is one who believes God and takes Him at His Word. Some denominations attempt to select some individuals for meritorious work and bestow the title of Saint upon them. This is not the Biblical model though. It is man’s choosing not God’s. God chooses all who believe, have been regenerated or born again and calls them Saints.

Paul then lets the Corinthians know that they have become connected to the universe of believers who are in different places in this world and heaven. No matter where they are believers are all over the world, not just in Corinth. Believers in other locations call on Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and so do the Corinthians. He is theirs as well as the other believers too. Jesus does not belong to some groups and not others. Some denominations claim that Jesus chose only them to bring His truth and any other channel of communicating the Gospel is false. This passage simply says that Christ belongs to all and all belong to Him who are saved and called saints.

I Corinthians 1: 3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul in keeping with his desire to connect believers reminds us of the grace of God that He willingly bestows upon us at the point of salvation and forever more. This grace equals an unmerited blessing for` sinful mankind because we have taken His free gift (Rom 6:23) of eternal life through Jesus of Nazareth from God the Father. Paul being as he put it the “chief of sinners” (I Tim 1:15) is extremely aware of what Christ did for us. He knows that God left eternity, climbed into a human body to intentionally suffer the excruciating pain of a crucifixion so that we might be reunited with God the Father. Once belief really occurs and the human is regenerated he has made peace with God (Rom 5).

Then the peace of God permeates us (Phil 4:7) and we are left with this wonderful transformation that endures for our time on earth and on into eternity. Paul who had a very dramatic experience coming to Christ on the road to Damascus, Syria vividly recalls this event, which changed the course of his life through his reminding to us to be aware of the grace that Christ has imparted to us.

I Corinthians 1: 4-9 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God, which is given you by Jesus Christ; That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Even though Paul has strong concerns for the abominable behavior of some in the Church has nevertheless begins his discourse with a prayer of thanksgiving. He thanks God for the grace, which He bestowed upon them. He makes it quite clear that we have been completely transformed into a completely new person (*in every thing*) including manner of speaking and knowledge of meaningful unworldly spiritual matters. This transformation of our entire being, which is manifested in our speech and knowledge, confirms the presence of Christ in our lives. This can't be faked. They were exhibiting their transformation through the exercise of their spiritual gifts such as, prophecy, tongues, discernment of spirits, and/or interpretation. These gifts being made manifest bore testimony to the fact that God has securely planted His Word in them.

Because of this genuine validated transformation the Corinthians and us too will be exempt from the Tribulation, which will be for a seven-year duration. The Church will not be here for this period of removing of sin from the earth. This is one aspect of the blessed assurance. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1). So we are considered blameless! This also means we are "free from accusation" when Christ returns for His Church and at the Second Coming too. We are commanded to eagerly wait for Christ's return seven times in the New Testament (Rom 8:19, 23,25; I Cor 1:7; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28)

Paul closes this section with a reminder of the faithfulness of God in keeping His Word. He always does what He says. Scripture cannot be broken (John 10: 35) it is always true. God does not lie (Titus 1:2) and He is capable (Isa 14:24).

It is important to realize that as Paul is in preparation for his rebuking of the believers at Corinth he is ready to tell them that a true believer cannot enjoy fellowship with Christ if he or she is at odds with other members of the Body of believers. This is a transition verse. He has built them up with objective observations of their position "in Christ" regarding what Christ did for them. Now he begins to tell them what Christ will do for them in the future, namely mend their divisions.

I Corinthians 1: 10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions

among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Eighteen months after Paul had founded the Church at Corinth the Church was filled with divisions and arguments. Paul a devout Jew and a Pharisee knew the Old Testament well. He knew that Proverbs 6:1 stated the Lord hated those that sowed discord among the brethren. Therefore it is to this title, brethren Paul address his discussion of discord among them (brethren). Further since he established the authority of his speech as coming from Christ he says he urgently and fervently (beseech) begged them to seek unity. He was not asking unity while tolerating sin. He knew better and will address this in the next verse. It is important for us to be unified but it must be unity of belief in truth. We must not forsake truth for unity.

I Corinthians 1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them, which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

It is quite possible that Chloe had a home church and those who met in her house told Paul that there was a lot of mischief taking place in this local assembly. Or maybe her servants were the church members and they told Paul of the trouble some were causing in dividing this congregation by sinning.

I Corinthians 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

One major aspect of the division was the adherence of individuals to different teachers. Each person in this local church was found to be stating that they followed a particular Christian leader. We find this taking the form of following a particular teacher or pastor then changing to another and another. Some people in the larger population centers switch churches frequently. Factions in a church will destroy its unity. Some will follow different people for different reasons. Some only know the Lord Jesus and His Word through commentaries. Instead of consulting the Bible with questions they look to men instead of God. In this particular instance Paul separates out himself as well as Peter, Apollos and the Lord Jesus Himself.

I Corinthians 1:13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

In his rebuke of them he makes it quite clear that none of these people except for Jesus were crucified and provided the means for baptism into His name. The three rhetorical questions in this verse were answered in an emphatic NO. The invisible universal Body of Christ is not divided and neither must its local assembly. This is one source of church splits. Divided doctrine will split a church faster than anything else. People have a variety of sincerely held beliefs that may not square with the proper grammatical exposition. Frequently it will cause divisions when the Body does not meet around the truth of Scripture. Only a proper understanding of Scripture and clear teaching will unify believers around Christ. No man ever won salvation for any believer nor does

anybody owe anything to anybody other than Christ. If anybody attempts to take credit for another's salvation run don't walk away from him or her.

I Corinthians 1:14-16 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.

Paul gives thanks that he only baptized a few of the Corinthians. He did not want that activity to enhance their inappropriate dependency on him and not place their dependency on Christ. According to John 4:2 even Jesus did not baptize. He left this to his disciples. This was usually Paul's practice too. He knew that if he baptized regularly they would begin to draw to him instead of Christ. Baptism as an adult is quite an experience, which can produce dependency on the one performing the ordinance. Believers are not baptized into different pastors. We are baptized into the family of God pure and simple.

I Corinthians 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

Paul is not minimizing the importance of baptism he knew that it was commanded by Christ Himself (Matt 28:19). Paul is simply stating that his role is to preach the good news and even that was a source of division. Paul states here that his presentation of the gospel is not with any human wisdom or clever crowd pleasing or swaying speeches. He speaks straight from Christ as he asserted in the beginning of this book. This is not the way of the world. Truth is variable or relative in this world. Some call this situational truth. People of the world use some truth coupled with their own hidden agendas to pursue selfish ambitions. In the world political scene we see this acted out on a regular basis. They say one thing and do another pursuing a worldly power of persuasion. If Paul depended upon worldly methodologies he would get worldly results; divisions and factions. Therefore he is stating that his words contained no worldly wisdom so that the effect of the gospel would not be hampered.

I Corinthians 1: 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

The children of this world who have no interest in God and are following Satan's plan will receive the gospel as utter foolishness. They may even laugh at you for telling them. Even though Christ's life, death and resurrection on this earth were factual events they are so driven by their own fleshly desires they have as it, were *scales on their eyes* and can't see. We who are regenerated can see the gospel of God because He has given us the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit to discern spiritual matters and understand the Scriptures (John 6:63; 14:17; 16:13; etc). We understand the power of God is to be found at the cross. This is because without the self-sacrifice that God the Son made and his Him coming back to life no man could have any confidence in eternal security. These

are facts not clever ideas or fanciful beliefs from unreliable sources. We can rely on the truth of the gospel.

I Corinthians 1:19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

Paul now goes on to summarize Isaiah 29:14 which emphasizes the point that God's way of thinking is not man's way of thinking. Human wisdom and brilliant ideas are worthless as a means of salvation. One example of human wisdom supplanting trust in God is when the Israelites attempted to form an alliance with Egypt as a defense against Assyria. Only God's intervention could save them (Isa 29:14; 2 Kings 18:17-19:37). Without a personal knowledge and relationship of God reliance on human wisdom becomes the avenue of decision we make. We must not be afraid of the situations we face in this life as believers. God will lead us in the way we should walk.

People can spend their entire lives gathering human wisdom and never realize that the God of the universe only wants three things from us:

1. Our love
2. A relationship
3. Obedience to His commandments

It is only through a saving grace relationship with the Lord Jesus the Christ that one begins to walk in righteousness in this life.

I Corinthians 1:20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

God controls all things in this world. Therefore it is to Him we must appeal for a solution for each situation in which we are involved. Man's brilliance cannot appreciate the plan of God.

I Corinthians 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

God decided that people would never find Him through human wisdom. He chose to use a man crucified on a Roman cross and a message of salvation delivered by weak and fallible human beings to *save all who believe!* This is the most absurd reasoning and belief structure to the lofty high-minded thinkers of this world. The message has been and continues to be mocked. They want something more substantial than the *foolishness of preaching* of believers. With the high and mighty and their lofty ideas they will never find God if they maintain their worldly reasoning. Only through a crushed spirit and a dethroning of their worldly positions can they begin to see that God is greater than them and He wants the same three things from them as He wants from all of us.

1. Our love
2. A relationship
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