

1 Corinthians Study 1

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

KEY VERSE—

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” (1:10)

SUMMARY—

This letter begins with a salutation and Paul’s words of thanksgiving, which serve as more than customary courtesy, but actually introduce us to the content of the entire letter (1:1-9). He mentions the unity of the church (1:2), its purity (1:8), its spiritual gifts (1:7), and its future glory (1:7-8). This basically outlines the rest of the epistle. Chapters 1-4 will deal with the divisions which threaten Christian unity. Chapters 5-11 are concerned with the purity and sanctity of the church. Chapters 12-14 will elaborate on the use of their spiritual gifts. Chapter 15 discusses the resurrection and our future glory. Then he gets to the very source of all their other problems—there are contentions among them which are about to develop into full-blown divisions (1:10-17). He then stresses the inconsistency of their claim to be a body of Christ and at the same time be divided—such a condition destroys everything they live for.

QUESTIONS—

1) Paul begins with a defense of his apostleship (1:1). Where did he receive his commission? Why does he seem to be so defensive of it in this book (1 Corinthians 9:1; 2 Corinthians 11:4-5; 12:11-13; 13:3; cf. Galatians 1:15-16)?

2) Who was Sosthenes possibly (Acts 18:8,17)?

3) What are four ways Paul describes this church (1:2)? Does that seem consistent in view of their beliefs and actions? Why does he say it then?

4) How does God view the faithfulness of every local church (cf. Revelation 2-3; note 3:1-4)? Does God quickly cast off a congregation for each of its sins, or after much patience, longsuffering, and many attempts to restore them? Why would He exhibit such patience (2 Peter 3:8)?

5) What kind of things did Paul find to be thankful for in the lives of these brethren (1:4-9)?

6) Paul stresses the brotherhood of Christians (1:1,2,9,10,11). Are we brothers and sisters because of what we do or what Jesus has done? Who decides when that relationship is cut off?

7) Find six references to Jesus as “Lord” in this passage. Why would it be so important to establish that fact in the introduction of this particular epistle? What is true if Jesus is Lord?

8) What three reasons does Paul mention in thanking God for these brethren (1:4,5a,7a)?
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9) In speaking of God's work in the Corinthian church, Paul speaks of what God "gives" and has "given" (1:4; 2:12; 3:7,10; 11:15; 12:7,8,24; 15:38,57). What is being emphasized with the use of these particular words?

10) As sinful as the Corinthians were, were they any lower than any other Christians (1:7)? It wasn't gifts they lacked—what did they lack (8:1-3; 13:1-3)?

11) What was Paul's hope for these brethren (1:8)? How could he possibly hope for such a thing when they were guilty of so many sins (cf. Ephesians 5:25-27)?

12) What were they able to base their confidence on (1:9)?

13) How is this introduction (1:1-9) a foundation for Paul's plea for unity (1:10)? What two things does Paul base this plea on in v. 10?

14) What three things does Paul plead with the brethren to do (1:10)? Would this suggest that we need to adopt a formal creed in order to be in full agreement or does it insist that we be unified in our relationship with Christ? Does he speak of perfect agreement or perfect unity based on agreement (1:10)?

15) What was happening in the church (1:11)? What was it leading to?

16) What was developing as they associated with many other names than Christ's (1:11-12)? What is the folly in that (1:13; cf. Acts 4:12)?

17) Does Paul say he is against baptism (1:14)? Why was Paul glad he had not baptized many of them (1:12,15)?

18) Is Paul saying that baptism is not important (1:17)? Then why do some people today use this verse to imply that he is? Such people would claim that men like Crispus was saved by faith alone, without being baptized, because baptism is not mentioned (cf. Acts 18:8). Is this true (1:14)?

19) What must we elevate in our preaching (1:17)? What must we avoid elevating (1:12; 4:6-7)?

20) Is it possible for preachers and prominent church leaders to win followers for themselves? Are such people also followers of Christ? What happens to the power of the cross (1:17)?