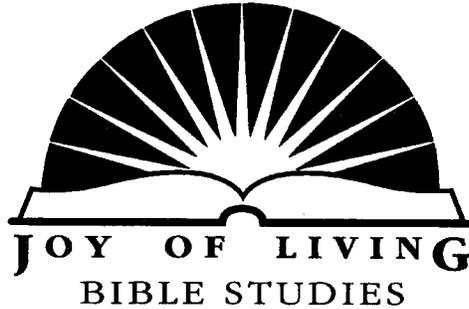


# 1 Corinthians

## Lesson 2



### 1 Corinthians 1

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In reading through the book of 1 Corinthians, it doesn't take long to discover that Paul is writing to a local assembly of believers with a multitude of problems. These Corinthian Christians were fighting over petty details and living a lifestyle that was dishonoring to the Lord. Families were falling apart and the Gospel had lost its cutting edge, both within the church and with the unbelievers who observed this body of believers in disarray. How would you begin a letter to such a group or individual who had fallen into these sins?

#### Verses 1-3 — Paul's Credentials

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Paul begins his letter by claiming his authority as an apostle to write such a letter. Modern day dictionaries define an apostle as "one sent forth" or "messenger," i.e., one sent forth with a message. In Paul's day there was a more limited use of the title. Without these limitations what safeguards were there to keep the teachings of Christ pure and to prevent someone who had a pet viewpoint from proclaiming it as being from God? In 1 Corinthians Paul responded to those creating the divisions in Corinth who were pressing him to prove his right to be called an apostle. This was a very serious matter, since an apostle was responsible for keeping the teachings of the church free of error. The church was founded upon the teachings of Christ and the apostles (see Hebrews 2:3-4; Ephesians 2:19-20). What gave Paul the authority to call himself an apostle?

There are four basic proofs of Paul's apostleship offered in the New Testament:

1. He received his apostleship directly from God (see 1 Corinthians 1:1); it was confirmed to Ananias by God in Acts 9:15-16.
2. He had personally seen the resurrected Christ. He speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. We have one occasion of this recorded in Acts 9:1-19. There may have been other occasions as well (see Galatians 1:11-12).
3. He had power to perform miracles, great spiritual discernment, and the courage to speak boldly and forthrightly (see Acts 9:20-22; 19:11-12; 2 Corinthians 12:11-12.)
4. He answered directly to God, not to any man (see Galatians 1:10-24). Paul had a healthy independence from man and dependence upon God for approval.

After he claims his authority as an apostle, instead of reprimanding the Corinthians Paul reminds them of the blessings they have received from God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The word for "church" in 1 Corinthians 1:2 in the original Greek language is "ecclesia," meaning "a called-out people." Paul goes on to say that these "called-out" Corinthians are "sanctified in Christ Jesus," that is, set apart for God's enjoyment and use. We are often reminded of our need to enjoy God, which we should, but how often do we stop to reflect on the fact that God enjoys us?

If someone gave you a beautiful vase and you simply put it on a shelf, you might take pleasure from the knowledge that it is yours and you might even admire it as you display it. But that is not the purpose for which it was made. You will only enjoy that vase as you begin to use it. God did not call us to be ornaments, but to be instruments of His grace for His glory.

In 1 Corinthians 1:3 Paul uses his very familiar salutation in extending to these Corinthians grace and peace from God the Father. The order is never reversed. Grace is an expression of the unconditional love of God. It must be experienced personally before we can make peace with God and know His peace which passes understanding.

#### Verses 4-9 — Blessings Through Christ

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The Greek word for "enriched" in 1 Corinthians 1:5 is the word from which we get our English word "plutocrat," meaning a very wealthy person. The fact that God has *called* us (Jesus said in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you"); *sanctified* us—that is, set us apart for His use (see 1 Corinthians 6:11); and *enriched* us (1 Corinthians 1:5) should encourage us to live holy lives. So Paul reminds the Corinthians that, not only have they (and we) been called out by God, but also enriched by His grace (see 1 Corinthians 1:5-6), gifted (see verse 7), kept strong to the end, declared blameless (see verse 8), and called into the fellowship of His Son (see verse 9). How much we need to be reminded of these wonderful truths!

In 2 Peter 1:3-12, Peter, led by the Holy Spirit, takes this same approach. In verses 3-8, he encourages the believers to grow and to add to their faith wonderful, God-like qualities. Then in verse 9 he says, "But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins."