
The Author and the Recipients | 1 Corinthians 1:1-2

- Verse 1
 - **called**
 - Do not mistake **called** for either a mystical calling nor a predestination calling. The word is very basic, and is the equivalent of, "I am called a preacher."
 - **Called** is a descriptive word (not a verb), and is used of many (as in Matt. 20:16), and is different from *elect*, which is used of *few*. Both words are adjectives.
 - **through the will of God**
 - While apostleship inherently requires **the will of God** (or of the sending party), Paul brings this to the surface because his Apostleship was often called into question (as in 1 Cor. 9:1-2).
 - Apostleship required a direct appointment, which Paul had on the road to Damascus (one reason why his testimony is given repeatedly in Scripture).
 - Believers today should have as much scrutiny of one who claims to be an Apostle as the believers of Paul's day.
 - **Sosthenes our Brother**
 - Little is known of Sosthenes, but there is an intriguing mention of Sosthenes, a ruler of the Synagogue in Corinth who was beaten by the Hellenists. Could this humiliation have been part of what led him out of the Synagogue and into the Christian faith? If so, Sosthenes is a Jewish believer and former ruler of the Synagogue. This being the case, the somewhat Jewish nature of the letter would be more easily understood.
- Verse 2
 - Using grammar to outline the sentence, a three-fold division arises (by use of the verbs). There is an assumed verb from verse 1, being "writing," thus "Paul...and Sosthenes, writing to..."
 - **the church of God which is at Corinth,**
 - those having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints,
 - and additionally, the saints along **with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.**
 - This outline designates the **saints** separately from the other believers worldwide. Such a designation, while unnecessary in the evangelical understanding of sainthood (which I deem to be incorrect), is necessary to provide any sense of meaning to the words **both theirs and ours**.
 - The phrase **both theirs and ours** either refers to either **every place** or to **Jesus Christ**.
 - Only the latter makes full sense, and every English translation goes with the latter by making a change of word order from the Greek to make the phrase connect with **our Lord** rather than **every place**. (NIV84 goes so far as to say, "their Lord and ours," and NRSV, NLT, HCSB, TEV, *The Message* all do similar. Only Young's Literal keeps the original Greek word order.)
 - The significance: Paul is writing to two groups of people, both the **saints** and those in **every place who call upon the name of Jesus Christ**, who is the Lord of both groups. Such a two-fold designation (which is required by grammar) requires a different interpretation of saints than the standard evangelical definition. I contend that saints are the redeemed Jews of the first century.

Paul's Prayer for the Corinthians | 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

- Verse 3 - **Grace** and **peace** are the two words that best describe the dispensation of Grace. Rather than the promised *judgment* and *war* of the closing days of the dispensation of Law (a dispensation which has been temporarily put on hold), God has offered a limited-time dispensation of grace and peace.
- Verse 4 - Unlike in his letter to the Romans, Paul doesn't express thanks for the people themselves, but rather thanks God on their behalf, **for the grace of God** given to the Corinthians. It is possible that the sinful activity of the church had discouraged or disgruntled Paul, but he is both positive and grace-oriented in his introduction.
- Verse 5
 - For the believer, grace ought to permeate and enrich **every thing** in our lives. Grace needs to be our constant focus and blessing. From **every thing** Paul specifically enumerates two things that grace ought to enrich:

- **all utterance** - The Greek is *logos*, thus "in all words." This refers to the communicated word (in speech or writing), but also to the meaning and understanding of the spoken and written words.
- **all knowledge** - The Greek is *gnosis*, which is both factual and spiritual/moral knowledge.
- Note of application: God's grace can enrich our lives in the here and now as His grace enables us to have different speech and thinking patterns.
- Verse 6
 - **Even as** - The Greek καθὼς [kathos] is the strongest comparison word. It could be translated *alike in every respect*, or *exactly as...*
 - **the testimony of Christ was confirmed** - This could be translated, "even as the testimony of Christ found a standing in you." It is in the passive tense, but does not require a Calvinistic understanding of their so-called "sovereign grace." It would be similar and equally valid if we might say, "His testimony resonated with me."
- Verse 7
 - **come behind in no gift** -
 - It is grammatically most likely that this phrase is the intended result of v. 5. **Even as...** then it follows **that ye come behind in no gift**.
 - **Gift** is χάρισματι [charismati], and is a reference to spiritual gifts, a topic which Paul will discuss in detail in chapters 12 and 14. Our modern term *charismatic* refers to one who believes that the sign gifts (healing, tongues, prophecy, etc.) are valid today.
 - Paul uses the double negative, which in Greek is the strongest form of negative statement.
 - **waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** -
 - It may shock some to know that Paul is NOT talking about the rapture, but the Second Coming. I firmly hold to a pre-tribulational rapture, however, vv. 7-8 is a message to *Jewish* believers who are still **waiting for the apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ**. The Greek ἀποκάλυψις [apokalypsis] is consistently the *unveiling* or *manifestation* of Jesus Christ on earth. Note that Revelation 1:1 uses almost identical words, and the Revelation is clearly *not* about the rapture.
 - It is my position (not held dogmatically) that this is a message to the Jewish saints of Corinth, given during the time when Israel was still capable of repentance and receiving the Kingdom, and these Jewish believers were **waiting** for just such an event, which would fulfill all God's promises to the Patriarchs. At the same time, they were expectant of a rapture which would remove them **from the wrath to come** (1 Thes. 1:10).
 - There is an alignment of theology in this regard. The *charismati* are related to the Kingdom, as is the Second Coming. Furthermore, there is evidence that 1 Corinthians has a Jewish audience, and thus would still be looking for the *apocalypse* rather than the rapture. The *charismati* endured until the destruction of Jerusalem, at which time Jewish believers were also no longer **waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ** but only waiting for the rapture.
- Verse 8 –
 - Paul will be very direct and will challenge the sin of the believers at Corinth, but he begins with the note of grace (v. 4) and assurance that God will **confirm you unto the end**. How different this is from modern adherents of either Calvinism or Lordship Salvation who are so quick to question the salvation of believers who are caught in sin.
 - The **day of our Lord Jesus Christ** or *the day of Christ* is a phrase only used by Paul, and is always given in a positive light, unlike the *Day of the Lord* which is always a day of judgment and terror. Thus, even though the Corinthian saints were **waiting for the apocalypse of our Lord Jesus Christ**, they were assured that the **day of our Lord Jesus Christ** would come first.
- Verse 9
 - Literally, *through* (not by) **whom ye were called**. Every believer is called *through* God, but the means will vary; by reading the Scripture, by hearing the Gospel preached, by the witness of a missionary, etc. Every instrument of Gospel proclamation is *through God* who made the proclamation possible by giving His Son to be the propitiation of the sins of the world.
 - Why is this important? Because if the call comes *by God* then Calvin's premise that God calls some and not others would have a degree of credibility.