



First Corinthians 1:1-9 The Believer's Position in Grace

IF YOU MISSED THE INTRODUCTION TO 1ST CORINTHIANS READ **ACTS 7:58; 8:1-3; 9:1-30; GALATIANS 1:11-24**, FOR THE BACKGROUND ON THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL. FOR THE BACKGROUND ON WHEN PAUL FIRST CAME TO CORINTH READ ACTS 18: 1-18.

Verse 1 –

- **Paul** was an **apostle**. The word **apostle** (Greek: ἀπόστολος, apostolos) means *messenger, or sent one, or even one who is sent on a mission*. In Greek literature the word has a form of meaning of a *ship ready for departure*. Even in Greek mythology the form of the word shows up as *Poseiden*, the god of the sea, water, earthquakes, etc. The Jewish historian Josephus uses the word in his writings—it is translated there as *ambassador*. In this case, Paul's apostleship was one of extraordinary status since he was an apostle of Jesus Christ (i.e. sent by Christ).
- Called **to be**. Notice these words are italicized. Words which are italicized are words not found in the Greek text. They have been added by the translators to clarify a sentence.
 - Italicized words can be helpful but caution is needed when reading them.
 - Sometimes italicized words can change a meaning rather than clarify a meaning.
 - Some translations like ESV and NIV do not italicize words. This makes it difficult for those of us who are English readers to know exactly what the passage is stating. The NKJV, NASB, and KJV along with a few others italicize words which are added by the translators. For serious study you must have a translation that italicizes words.
- **Paul, called to be an apostle**. Since the words **to be** are added, the literal reading of the sentence is, "Paul, called apostle." It is just three words in the Greek: ΠΑΥΛΟΣ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος.
 - This could mean Paul is simply called by the name apostle, like you would call your pastor, Pastor Roger.
 - Another literal reading could be "Paul a called apostle."
 - It makes a difference whether Paul was called *an apostle* or if he was called *to be* an apostle.
 - It is different from the word elect. In other words this is not a *predestination* calling. It is not some mystical calling. It is a calling by a sending party, in this case **Jesus Christ, by the will of God**.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

ANY CALLING WE MAY RECEIVE TO MINISTRY DOES NOT COME BY MYSTICAL MEANS. IT IS A SPECIFIC CALLING FROM THE BODY OF CHRIST THE LOCAL CHURCH. A MAN OR A WOMAN MAY DESIRE TO SERVE THE LORD IN SOME CAPACITY, PERHAPS MISSIONARY WORK—IT IS THE CHURCH WHICH CALLS THEM AND SENDS THEM. WE DON'T SEE MEN AND WOMEN ACTING ALONE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND IT SHOULD NOT HAPPEN TODAY. THEY ARE CALLED BY THE BODY OF CHRIST TO DO HIS WORK.

- Apostleship required a direct appointment, which Paul received on the Damascus road (see Acts 9:1-30).
- **Through the will of God**. Paul's credentials as an apostle were called into question often. He was scrutinized for being an apostle. Those who make the claim of being an apostle today should receive as much, if not more scrutiny as Paul, since it is doubtful there are apostles today.

- **Sosthenes our brother.** Little is known about this man.
 - He is first mentioned in Acts 18:17.
 - He was the chief ruler of the synagogue who was beaten before the BEMA seat (judgment seat).
 - Did Sosthenes become a believer after this? Or had he already been convicted about Christ before the beating?
 - He was a co-author of this letter which may account for it having a somewhat Jewish tone as we will see later.

Verse 2 –

- **Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.** The word church is the Greek word, *ekklesia* which means an assembly. Not just Christians, it can mean any gathering of people or citizens either planned or by chance (as in Acts 19:32). The church is not a building, rather it is a gathering of people. The assembly in Corinth was founded by the apostle Paul, along with Aquila and Priscilla (See Acts 18).
 - Paul gained converts by “reasoning and persuading” (Acts 18:4) in the synagogue every Sabbath day (Saturday).
- **Sanctified in Christ** is a term of dedication. It could mean some kind of moral behavior. To be sanctified is to be dedicated to the service and to loyalty and deity. In this case, **Christ Jesus**.

This letter is written to,

1. The **assembly of God which is at Corinth**.
2. **To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints** (the words “to be” are not in the Greek)
3. **With all that in every place call upon the name of the Jesus Christ our Lord**.

Notice how **the saints** are mentioned separately from **all that in every place call...**

This could indicate that when Paul mentions **saints** he is meaning Jewish believers. **Both theirs and ours** seems to lead us to consider this!

Are saints, when mentioned in the New Testament, redeemed Jews? Is there a differentiation between **saints** (Jews) and **all that... call upon the name of Jesus**? If so, it could mean evangelicals need to rethink certain interpretations of various New Testament books, like 1 Peter.

We must remember the Bible is a Jewish book. Either way, praise the Lord the Gentiles are grafted in (Romans 11:17) to the Olive Tree.

Verse 3 –

- **Grace** is Paul’s common formula for greeting his readers.
- The Greek word “charis” is translated as “favor” in some familiar passages: Luke 1:30; Luke 5:52. In the context it indicates divine favor. It is favor we do nothing to earn. Do
- Along with grace comes **peace**. Our world longs for peace, but it cannot and will not be achieved by man striving for it. True and lasting peace comes from God through the **Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Does this Corinth church need grace and peace?

Verse 4 –

This is a grace filled introduction by Paul to the church in Corinth.

- **I thank my God always on your behalf.** This prayer of thanks refers back to verse 3. Paul is thanking God for the grace and peace bestowed on this church.
- **For the grace of God which is given you.** Grace is not earned. It is given to the one who believes, regardless of his actions or moral behavior. It is grace given by God which saves (Ephesians 2:8,9).

- **By Jesus Christ.** Salvation by grace through faith is only secured through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12: *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Verse 5 –

It is because of grace **that in every thing we are enriched.** The Greek word *ploutizo* [ploo-tid-zo] means "to make rich" or "to be richly furnished." But made rich or richly furnished in what?

- Name it claim it? Does it mean rich in this world? Look at the context!

We are enriched in every thing by Jesus Christ in two things: **in all utterance, and in all knowledge.**

1. **In all utterance.** The word utterance is the Greek word *Logos*. It is different from the Greek word *Graphe*. For example the Greek word *Graphe* is found in 2 Timothy 3:16,

"All Scripture (*graphe*) is given by inspiration of God." The Scripture you hold is *graphe*. The *Logos* is the *graphe* spoken by the living voice. *Logos* is anything in reported speech.

Therefore when Jesus is described as the *Logos*, He is the living, breathing, embodiment of the Word!
We are enriched by speaking the *logos*, and hearing the *logos*.

A good example of how *Logos* and *graphe* go together is found in Revelation 1:3:

"Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words (*logos*)...and keep those things which are written (*grapho*)..."

We are enriched by the Word of God.

2. **And in all knowledge.** It follows that **knowledge** flows from the **utterance** of the Word of God. Bible study increases knowledge. Do you want to be smarter? Learn the Word of God. Because of Grace we are enriched when we read and hear the word of God—the result is an increase in knowledge.

Read, hear, and grow in the Word. That is how to become enriched!

Verses 6, 7 –

- We are also enriched because of the **testimony of Christ.**
 - The word **testimony** means witness. The Greek word is *martyrion* which comes from the word *martus*. That word may look familiar because we see it in our English word *martyr*. A martyr is one whose conviction resonates from him. That is Paul's point, we should all want the witness of Jesus Christ to resonate from us.
- Paul did not want the Corinthians to **come behind in any gift.** That means, the sign gifts, such as speaking in tongues, miraculous healings, raising the dead...he wanted them to have them all. Are those spiritual gifts still valid today?

Paul is writing this letter during a transition time or a pivot point in the nation of Israel. Since the letter was written in A.D. 59, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing. It would be destroyed in A.D. 70 (and will not be rebuilt until the time leading up to the Great Tribulation). With the Temple still standing, the offer for the kingdom of God to come to earth was still valid. If the people of Israel, as a

nation (meaning their leadership), looked to Messiah Jesus and said, "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*" (Luke 13:35), Jesus would return and set up his earthly kingdom.

Therefore, at the time of this writing, Kingdom gifts were still being given and practiced.

Later we will see that Paul says these gifts will cease (13:8). When will they cease? I believe it is after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

- **Waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is not the Rapture. Here Paul is referring to the Second Coming. The kingdom offer was still on the table. They were waiting for Jesus to come back to set up his kingdom. Recall the disciples question to Jesus in Acts 1:6, "*Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" They were waiting for the kingdom. Jesus told them, "*It is not for you to know...*"

Verse 8 –

Who shall also confirm points back to verse 7; it is the Lord Jesus Christ who shall confirm... Believers are confirmed to the end. The word "confirm" contains the word "firm". That is exactly the meaning, *to make firm*.

Jesus Christ will make you firm in your faith until the **day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Here, this day is the Rapture of the Church. The "day of Christ" relates wholly to the reward and blessing of believers and saints at his coming. Paul always uses the term "Day of Christ" in a positive sense. In contrast, *the day of the LORD* is always connected with judgment, darkness, and terror. The Corinthians could take heart in knowing the day of Christ would come first!

Those who adhere to a strict Calvinist or Reformed doctrine or Lordship salvation will often accuse someone who is caught in sin as not being a true believer. You can be assured of your salvation even if you fall into sin (there is never any need to doubt!). If you have placed your trust in Jesus Christ he has made you firm in your faith!

Verse 9–

If there is one characteristic of God that appears over and over throughout scripture, it is his faithfulness: **God is faithful**. Yet, it is the characteristic of God we most often forget; when we do we worry and become anxious. When we face a trial in life we often forget God's faithfulness and try to solve it on our own. When in fact, God may use that trial as a means to call you into a particular ministry or mission. Sometimes God calls us **by** our trials.

Young's Literal Translation says **through whom ye were called** (not *by whom* as in NKJV, KJV, ESV). Why does it matter? Every believer is called through God, but the way each believer is called may vary.

That means everyone is called. Some are called **by** attending a missionary conference and **by** hearing the witness of a missionary speaker, some are called **by** hearing the word of God taught or **by** reading the word of God, etc. In other words God calls all believers by various means, he doesn't call some and not others. So the call comes through God, but not by God--he uses other instruments to proclaim the Gospel.