

The Beauty of Christian CommUNITY

Studies in the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1:1-31

“A Church United Will Not Fall”

Historical cultural context: The Corinthian correspondence takes place around 550 years after the events of Nehemiah. **Political:** Corinth is a city in the Roman province of Achaia located in southern Greece. **Economics:** Corinth was a wealthy city with a healthy economy. It was a port city and site of the Isthmian games, which brought much trade. **Religion:** Various temples to pagan gods. Fornication and prostitution were common religious rituals in pagan religions. The city had a synagogue that served the Jewish community. **Ideology:** Philosophers promoted their version of “the wisdom of men” using rhetorical skills to impress people and attract students.

I. Called to be Saints in the Fellowship of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

- a. Paul’s apostolic ministry came with the authority to write Scripture, lay hands to give spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6), and lay hands for people to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6). He had a direct commission from Christ Jesus (Galatians 1:1, 11-12).
- b. Paul is thankful for this community of faith in Corinth. They are gifted and equipped with everything they need to do God’s will. The day of Christ is judgement day. Only through Christ can you stand blameless in the day of judgement. Believers have assurance of salvation because God is faithful. God called us into the fellowship (koinonia) of Christ (1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

II. A Desperate Plea for Gospel Unity (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

- a. Paul pleads with them in the authority of Christ to speak the same thing, have no divisions, and be joined in same mind and same judgement (decision making). Gospel unity is everyone working together to fulfill the will of God. Paul had to remind them of the New Covenant realities and their identity in Christ.
- b. An accusation was brought to his attention regarding contentions (Galatians 5:20). Christ is not divided into sections or groups. The mystery of the Gospel is the unity of believers not division.
- c. Paul wanted to avoid accusations that he was baptizing in his name. Crispus was a synagogue ruler who got saved during Paul’s ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:8). Gaius traveled with Paul and hosted Paul in his house as he wrote the letter of Romans (Romans 16:23). Stephanas was the first convert in the Roman province of Achaia (1 Corinthians 16:15). Baptism can become a religious ritual void of transforming power.

III. The Message of the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

- a. The message of the cross is the power of God. Why is the message foolish to the world? The world values power, dominance, strength, and logic. The Savior is someone who was condemned by the Roman government and Jewish leadership in the first century. The resurrection proved the identity of Christ and the effectiveness of His work (1 Corinthians 15:17; Romans 1:4). Jesus is alive and well and seated at the right hand of the Father.
- b. God's mind is infinitely superior to man. Philosophers had foolish conclusions about life and reality. The doctrine of God proves man's logic is insufficient (Job 38). Believing the preached Gospel is God's way to salvation (Romans 10:14).
- c. The message of Christ crucified was a stumbling block to some first century Jews because they sought righteousness by works of the Law (Romans 9:30-33). The Greeks wanted to be able to use human understanding, but it is spiritually discerned.
- d. **Christ the power of God** – demonstrated power over kingdom of darkness. Demonstrated power over death by resurrection. **Christ the wisdom of God** – defeated darkness through offering eternal atonement that reconciled sinners to God and united all believers into the body of Christ – restoring humanity to creation purpose (Ephesians 3).

IV. Called and Chosen for the Glory of God (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

- a. Paul is saying – God didn't call many popular, rich, or powerful people. God chose foolish, weak, base, and despised things. God flipped the world's values and power structures upside down.
- b. Christ is our **wisdom from God** – revelation from God is what we need to know because He knows everything. **Righteousness** – only received from God by faith. **Sanctification** – God makes people holy and transforms us from the inside out. Only God can change a sinner into a saint. **Redemption** – freed from sin bondage (Isaiah 59:20; Psalm 49:15; Isaiah 44:22). No one will be able to boast that they earned their salvation. You can only boast in the Lord.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO CATEGORIES: THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING AND THOSE WHO ARE BEING SAVED. BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND LIVE.

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