

Week 1: To the Church at Corinth and Everywhere Else - 1 Cor 1:1-9

Pre-Work

- What do we need to know before reading and understanding a letter written in the 1st Century AD? One thing important to know is the “historical context”, meaning 1) What was the historical worldview of the letter writer and audience? 2) What was going on in the world relevant to the letter? And 3) What was the particular situation the letter was addressing with its recipients? Please watch the following video from the Bible Project exploring these “need to knows” with New Testament letters.

<https://bibleproject.com/videos/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context>

- Please read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 in the translation of your choice. Who was the letter writer? To whom was it written? What is the author thankful for?

Class Notes

- Reading someone else's mail - for us but not originally to us
- Being good tourists

Chapter 1

1 Paul,

- About Paul: upbringing, apocalypse, ministry

called *as* an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

- What is an apostle of Jesus Christ?

and our brother Sosthenes,

- Sosthenes and how letters were written
- How letters were read

2 To the church of God which is in Corinth,

- Church as renewal agent and as local gathering
- The Corinthian church
- Corinth the city

to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:

- Also to every believer alive at that time who may read this letter
- Local issues vs general guidance

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Undeserved favor and wholeness come through the Spirit from the Father and the Son

4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

- Paul is thankful for the undeserved favor given to others

5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, **6** just as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you eagerly await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- Over 1 year of teaching in person about the testimony concerning Christ was enriching (πλουτίζω - a little irony on “making wealthy”) to them and confirmed their place in the family of God
- They have what it takes to await the apocalypse: what “waiting for the apocalypse” means

8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Their continuance in the faith is not dependent on their willpower but on the faithfulness of God.
- “Fellowship with His Son” - family of God language, a corporate identity

“We tend to locate the identity of our [church] communities within some denominational program, or within local politics, or within recent history. But Paul urges us instead to understand the church in a cosmic frame of reference that points to the final triumph of God’s righteousness, the setting right of all things in Jesus Christ. When we understand ourselves as actors within that epic drama, we undergo a crucial shift of perspective. On the one hand, the stakes are raised. Our actions belong to a larger pattern of significance than that of our own lives, and the church’s obedience to God’s will matters urgently, because it is part of God’s strategy for the eschatological renewal of the world. On the other hand, at the same time, we can get a better sense of proportion of our own striving and failures, for God is faithful, and and it is God who is at work in calling us and preparing us for his gracious ends. Thus, by reading the opening passage of the Corinthians’ mail, we can learn to see ourselves within the story of God’s grace in such a way that despair and pride and petty conflict should fall away.”~Richard B. Hayes, *First Corinthians, Interpretation Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*

How Paul has structured this letter:

Paul's own structure from Ch 1:5-9

1. "All speech and knowledge" (v5) - 1:18-4:21
2. "...confirm you to the end, blameless..." (v8) - 5:1-11:33
3. "...not lacking in any gift..." (v7) - Chs 12-14
4. "...await the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ..." (v7) - Ch 15
5. "...called into fellowship with His Son..." (v9) - Ch 16

Hebrew chiastic essays:

A - Introduction - 1:1-9

B - Essay 1: The Cross and unity 1:10-4:16

C - Essay 2: Men and Women in the new humanity 4:17-7:40

D - Essay 3: Freedoms and Responsibilities in Christ 8:1-11:1

C' - Essay 4: Men and women in worship 11:2-14:40

B' - Essay 5: The resurrection and eternity 15:1-58

A' - Conclusion - 16:1-23

Greco-Roman rhetorical style:

1. Prescript (1:1-3)
2. Thanksgiving and *exordium* (1:4-9)
3. *Propositio* (thesis statement) (1:10)
4. *Narratio* (1:11-17)
5. *Probatio with 9 arguments* (1:18-16:12)
6. *Peroratio* (16:13-18)
7. Postscript (16:19-24)

Other overlapping structure:

- Addressing questions and concerns from a Corinthian letter brought by Stephanas and also, separately, by reports from Chloe's people
- Corinth's errors

Reflections