

1 Corinthians, Chapter 1

1 Corinthians is part of an extended correspondence between Paul and the Christians at Corinth. From this letter, we see a good picture of St. Paul as a pastor, interpreting and applying the Gospel to the problems of this congregation. After his greeting, St. Paul expresses thanksgiving to God for the spiritual sufficiency of the Corinthian flock in the fellowship of the Gospel. He immediately takes up the reported dissensions, dwelling on them. Paul stresses that through the Word of the Cross, God has acted to bring people to salvation. Since God has accomplished this also among the Corinthians, the Gospel of Christ is far superior to human wisdom and power, and in all humility, mankind must glorify God for His work. **Read: 1 Corinthians 1**.



Paul wrote this open letter to the church in Corinth around A.D. 55. He established this congregation during his second missionary journey, about A.D. 52. He used the letter format of the day, identifying himself at the beginning as the author, indicating to whom he addressed the letter, and giving a word of greeting.

1. Note the credentials St. Paul presents in verse 1. Remember, Jesus sent the apostles as His personal representatives (John 20:21). St. Paul would have some strong rebukes and warnings to deliver in this letter. How would presenting these credentials be important to his task?
2. St. Paul describes the church in Corinth as “sanctified” and “called to be saints.” *Sanctified* means “set apart for God’s purposes”; *saints* are individuals separated from sin and consecrated to God. **Read: John 17:17-19 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24**. What do we learn from these passages about how we are sanctified and made a saint?
3. Why was St. Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit to write 1 Corinthians? What do the following passages reveal about how St. Paul learned about some of the problems in the church at Corinth?
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:11
 - b. 1 Corinthians 7:1
 - c. 1 Corinthians 16:17
4. St. Paul writes that he “always” (1 Cor. 1:4) thanks God for the church at Corinth. What does Paul thank God for?
 - a. 1 Cor. 1:4
 - b. 1 Cor. 1:5
 - c. 1 Cor. 1:6
 - d. 1 Cor. 1:7
 - e. For what specific things can you thank God regarding Prince of Peace Lutheran Church?
5. How does St. Paul encourage the Corinthian Christians in verse 8? Why could St. Paul say that the Church would be “guiltless” on that day (1 Cor. 1:8-9)?
6. What was the quarreling about in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:10-17)? What problems do you think such “cult of personalities” would cause in a congregation (1 Cor. 1:10-11)?

In saying that he baptized few people, St. Paul is not dismissing or denying the importance of Baptism. St. Paul speaks of Baptism in lofty terms in other passages (Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27). St. Paul is merely making a distinction between the task he was called to do, and the task others were called to do.

7. In 1 Cor. 1:18, St. Paul refers to the “word of the cross,” which he identifies as “the power of God.”
 - a. Why do we need saving? (Romans 3:10-12, 23; 6:23)
 - b. How did God save us? (John 19:18 and Colossians 1:19-20)
 - c. Why was it necessary for Jesus to suffer a cruel death on the cross to accomplish our salvation? (Hebrews 9:22; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21)
8. Why is the crucifixion of Christ a stumbling block to Jews? (Consider: Deuteronomy 21:22-23)
9. Why is the crucifixion of Jesus foolishness to Gentiles? (Consider: Matthew 27:38)
10. St. Paul distinguishes between the human and the divine in the task of presenting the Gospel in 1 Cor. 1:18-25. What reassurance does this offer to someone who is attempting to present the Gospel to an unbeliever? (See: Isaiah 55:11)
11. The Corinthians were not “wise according to worldly standards” (1 Cor. 1:26), nor were they influential or of noble birth, but God chose them and called them to faith. Why did God choose to call ordinary people rather than those who might more easily impress the fallen world? (Consider: 1 Cor. 1:28-29)
12. As far as the fallen world is concerned, how would you say 1 Cor. 1:28-29 compares with the situation today? Does the Gospel seem to appeal today especially to one class of people as compared to other classes of people?

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to help the church deal with problems such as divisions, immorality, and lawsuits. He also wanted to correct abuses connected with speaking in tongues and the Lord’s Supper. He wrote to correct false teachings about the resurrection. Finally, He wanted to give instruction about the collection for the poor in Jerusalem. In approaching these serious issues, St. Paul wrote with a spirit of humility, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit for guidance. **How would such a spirit be important in approaching problems that affect our churches today?**

Closing Prayer: (*from LSB 555 – Salvation Unto Us Has Come*)

- 1 Salvation unto us has come By God’s free grace and favor; Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone, Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.
- 6 Since Christ has full atonement made And brought to us salvation, Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation. Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead, Your death is now my life indeed,
For You have paid my ransom. Amen.

Text: Public domain

Sources: God’s Word for Today: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 1997), LifeLight: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2007), Luther’s Works (CPH, Fortress), Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians (CPH: 2000)

Pastor Peter Adelsen, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc. 2024