

## **Series in 1 Corinthians - #1 Getting Things Straight**

### **1 Corinthians 1: 1-9**

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9** <sup>1</sup> Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup> that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge— <sup>6</sup> even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— <sup>7</sup> so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup> who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Introduction:**

As we enter a new year, we also enter upon the study of another section of God's Word. Beginning this morning we will be undertaking an exposition of the epistle of 1 Corinthians, which is likely the very first New Testament book in terms of chronology. It is my intention to preach through the entire book this year.

Now when Pastor Brian preaches he will be finishing the book of Acts from the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter to the end – so we will both be going through books of the Bible – but by this time you will get a different voice going through Acts which we have been going through for some time now, with variations for different series and events.

This will be augmented from time to time when we have the Easter season, missionaries or other special speakers, like Dr. Jimmy DeYoung who will be bringing messages on the area of prophecy on the Sunday after easter. So this morning we begin in 1 Corinthians, and I will actually introduce more about Corinth and its people and circumstances in weeks to come as appropriate to our further understanding. But let me encourage you to keep ahead of our text each week so that you will have looked at the scripture in advance.

The Corinthian church was both a marvel and a mess, like many churches and many lives. As we will see, they are commended for a number of things, but we largely know them for some of the significant issues that existed in their midst. And to some extent most of our lives are like that – we do some things well, and we have some dysfunctions in other areas of our lives.

Paul's intention in his first epistle to the Corinthians is to preserve the marvel and clear up the mess. These are praiseworthy intentions but fraught with problems – for most people love praise, but they are not so eager to accept rebuke, and correction.

So we could easily begin with the question:

### **Why bother getting things straight?**

Well in our text I think Paul gives three indications why he would venture into such treacherous waters.

#### First - **because of the strategic position of the church.**

Note that in verse 2 he calls it the church of God that is in Corinth. When you look at this map you will see the strategic location of Corinth – at an isthmus where trade from east to west and west to east took place. Harbors on both sides of the city and a tramway had been built that allowed ships to be pulled across the 4 miles by slaves [which tells you about the 'slave' issue and what they did later on in the epistle] so that they could go both ways with commerce. While Athens was the chief government city for the area, Corinth was the chief commercial centre – and we all know that in reality commerce rules most countries. So consider the influence of the city – Paul believes it is important that the Christian witness there be strong.

#### Second - **because of the special purposes of Christ shown in a number of things:**

There was **God's calling work** – the people there were 'called to be saints along with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord

**Jesus Christ'**. [v. 2] Paul wasn't satisfied to let these people be less than what God had called them to. Simply being saved and plateaued or stagnated at the beginning level was clearly not an option for them, or for us today.

And there was **His confirming work** – 'even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you.' [v. 6] We will see in a moment the good things God had done in confirming them in the faith – thus showing His special purposes.

As well there was His Charismatic work – 'so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift' [v. 7] In their lives all the spiritual gifts were operative – thus indicating God's presence – and those gifts were meant for the fulfillment of God's calling them to build each other up.

And there was God's Climactic work – 'as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ' [v. 7] History moves towards an end when Christ takes home a spotless bride – enabling that bride to see God's special purpose is great motivation to help people get things straight.

Third he wants to help get things straight because of **the spiritual privileges of Christians**

**Realizing God's plan** – 'will of God' [v. 1] It was God's will that as one called to be a leader – that he should be a reconciler and that this part of His plan applied to all of the believers.

**Relating to God's people** – 'theirs and ours' [v. 2] While our personal experience is precious – the reality is that Jesus Christ is Lord of 'both them and us' – he could not remove himself from being a co-participant in their pilgrimage with the Lord.

**Relying on God's promises** – 'God is faithful' [v.9] He knew that getting involved in the messiness of helping the Corinthians 'getting things straight' was embarking on a successful involvement because 'God is faithful – by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.'

With that as motivation we can see that Paul really answers the ensuring question How do we go about getting things straight?

### **How do we go about getting things straight?**

First - **by giving credit where it is due**

And that begins with a vertical perspective.

**Credit to God** – ‘the grace of God’ [v. 4] ‘I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.’

The reason we can be optimistic that believers can understand, can get on the right track and can operate in God’s way is because it is HIS GRACE that is operative, not their fleshly and human abilities and thinking and efforts.

If we start, by trying to get ‘people’ to change, without recognizing that believers are truly those who are being transformed BY GOD’S GRACE, we will certainly get discouraged. So we must start by acknowledging that God’s grace is powerful and transformational and given freely because God is in control.

But secondly we give **credit to those who demonstrate His grace**

Look at verses 5 -7 **1 Corinthians 1:5-7**<sup>5</sup> that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge—<sup>6</sup> even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—<sup>7</sup> so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

**1 Corinthians 11:2**<sup>2</sup> Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.

Pretty high commendation – honestly given for the areas where he clearly saw God’s grace at work in their lives.

But getting things straight also **giving criticism where it is necessary** - and we see that illustrated all through the epistle.

First - **incompatibility that is not being resolved** [1:10] **1 Corinthians 1:10**<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

## Second - Irresponsibility that is not being recognized

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 <sup>1</sup> But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,

Hebrews 5:11-12 <sup>11</sup> About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. <sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,

Third - **Immorality that is not being rebuked.** 1 Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

## Fourth - Illiteracy that is not being rectified. 1 Corinthians 3:16

<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

1 Corinthians 6:9 <sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

1 Corinthians 6:15-16 <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

And there is one other area in which he helped get things straight – by giving clarification where it is needed

Concerning **marital matters** [7: 1-40]

Concerning **social matters** [8:1-10:33]

Concerning **ecclesiastical matters** [11:1 – 14:40]

Concerning **theological matters** [15: 1-50]

Concerning **financial matters** [16: 1-24]

So I would suggest that true biblical preaching impacts on all these areas of our lives, and none of us are free to say something like 'you have no right to speak to me about my life – that is my own business between the Lord and me' – when in the very first epistle written by the Apostle Paul – he clearly indicates that we

live in fellowship with one another, we must build each other up and our freedoms are indeed limited by deference to the weaker brother and sister.

**Conclusion:**

So we enter into a study of this great epistle this year of 2012. And we come to the table of the Lord together this very first day of the year, and the first Lord's day to reestablish who is Lord, and be reminded of first things. Let us truly prepare our hearts to participate at the Table this morning giving great credit to our great God who has saved us.