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1 Corinthians 1

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

1 Corinthians 1.

Topics.

- Paul greets all those at the church in Corinth.
- Be united in the same mind and the same judgment.
- "I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas" and "I follow Christ."
- The message of the cross is the power of God to save.
- God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.
- God chose things that are not to bring to nothing things that are.
- No human can boast in the presence of God.

INTRODUCTION: the city of Corinth was at the heart of a primary trade route in the ancient world, like many cities that thrive on trade, Corinth had a reputation for sexual immorality, religious diversity, and corruption. The church that Paul planted there (Acts 18) floundered under all of these influences and began to divide over various issues. First Corinthians addresses many of the practical questions dividing the church, such things as spiritual gifts, marriage, food offered to idols, and the resurrection. Paul urged the Corinthians to be unified and to give themselves fully to "The work of the Lord" (15:58). Chapter 13 includes a well-known passage on the nature and importance of love. Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians from Ephesus in the spring of A.D. 55.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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- In certain chapters this letter is written as though Paul is having a conversation with the Corinthians (i.e., he asks them a question and then answers it etc.).
- Though Paul's letter is directed to the Corinthian church the content applies to any church or believer in the same situations.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-5

Paul greets all those at the Church in Corinth.

- **1 Corinthians 1:1-5:** Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To 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: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus ⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge

Saints: in this context refers to everyone who trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Called: carries the idea of being invited.

Sanctification: does not mean, being saved since righteousness that leads to eternal salvation is a free gift that God imputes to all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is instant i.e., the moment a sinner humbly comes to Christ in repentance not only are they fully forgiven and pardoned, but God counts them righteous. Sanctification carries two

thoughts, firstly those who belong to Christ are counted holy by God because of their faith (not their self-effort) and secondly it carries the idea of being made holy, meaning as brothers and sisters in Christ grow in God's love and grace their minds, attitudes, behaviour and actions are changed to be more like Christ who they now behold as the King of their lives and as their supreme love. Paul is addressing this letter to the church that is in Corinth and to all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ which means the principals and teachings Paul covers in this letter applies to every church of every generation who are faced with similar situations or questions.

NOTICE: God's grace comes to us all through Christ (v4).

The words, "In every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge" mean that knowing Christ changes the way a person speaks, i.e., they do not join in with smutty jokes or conversations that would be offensive to God while in knowledge is obvious since in Christ they understand the Good News of the Gospel which states eternal salvation is by grace and not self-effort or works.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:6-9

Be united in the same Mind and the same Judgment.

- **1 Corinthians 1:6-9:** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ ⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The testimony of Jesus: the testimony of Christ refers to the fact he is the Son of God, that he died and rose again, that through faith in him sinners are set free from the law of sin and death which states:

- For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23)

This means that the law of sin and death has no power over those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him they like Christ will be raised to eternal glory. Jesus testimony embraces the majestic Good News of the Gospel which states; whoever comes to God through repentance and faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ is not only approved of and accepted by God the Father, but all their sins are forgiven, not because they are deserving of it, by any self-effort or religious good works, but because through faith in Christ righteousness is imputed from God to them as a pure and free gift, but this is not the end of the testimony of Jesus since God's promise also state that the faithful in Christ will be resurrected to eternal glory and everlasting life. Can there be any better testimony than this? Thus, one of the reasons Jesus testimony is called 'the Good News of the Gospel.

NOTICE: not only is Jesus sustaining us until he returns, but he will hold us guiltless when he does return, this is the majestic beauty of grace, it is because God's abundant grace works through Christ to all who are trusting in him for their eternal salvation and faithfully following him, since it is our faith that God counts as our righteousness and not our self-effort and good works.

The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ: the words, "The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" refer to the Lord Jesus Christ's return as, as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his millennial reign. In the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-5) the dead in Christ and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together to rule and reign as kings and priests

with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God. The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Spiritual Gifts: it's enough at the moment for us to know that the Corinthian church was not lacking in spiritual gifts (v7), for greater detail on these gifts see chapter twelve in which Paul shines a spotlight on spiritual gifts and the proper use of them in the church.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-16

"I follow Paul," "I follow Apollos," "I follow Cephas," and "I follow Christ."

- **1 Corinthians 1:10-16:** 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. ¹¹For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarrelling among you, my brothers. ¹²What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I baptised none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were baptised in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptise also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptised anyone else.)

Paul's appeal for the Corinthians to be "United in the same mind and the same judgment" (v10) in this context means to see themselves as all following Christ contrasted to being followers of men. Paul has been told that amongst the Corinthian congregation there is quarrelling and division, because some are claiming to be followers of Paul, others of Apollos or Cephas while yet another group in the same church rightly claims to follow Christ. Paul makes it clear that no matter how great the leader of the church may appear to be no-one should be exalting them as the one they follow, since Christ is the only perfect example and the only One, we should ever claim to be followers of.

Were you baptised in the name of Paul? Paul's words "Were baptised in my name?" (v13) teach us an important lesson today, there is a danger when some new converts are baptised by a particular religious institution or denomination they may view the baptism as being a baptism into that institution more than into Christ since some religious organizations will not accept a person as a member unless they are baptised by them whereas the focus should be on baptising the repentant sinner into Christ regardless of whether they want to be a member of a religious institution or not. This is because it is their free choice and not a requirement of being baptised into the global body of Christ. Church membership should not be a hindrance to a person seeking to be baptised into the worldwide family of Christ since water baptism is a totally separate thing to membership of a particular religious organisation, institution or even a local church.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:17-25

The Message of the Cross is the Power of God to Save.

- **1 Corinthians 1:17-25:** For Christ did not send me to baptise but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. ¹⁸For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called (Invited) both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

The wise in this context carries the idea of those who are prideful, conceited and consider themselves wise in their own eyes. To these the message of the cross appears foolishness. Even though Paul understood this he did not attempt to proclaim the gospel and the cross so that it would appeal to human wisdom, but rather to preach it with simplicity. The power of the cross (the death and resurrection of Christ) refers to its message since the message of the cross not only has the power to spiritually change lives, but also to deliver a person from mortality to immortality, from eternal death to eternal life. The message of the cross is simple in fact so much so that it makes it difficult for those who are prideful, conceited and consider themselves wise by their own knowledge to accept since their heart condition is not right, yet a humble person with very limited education can with great ease understand the message of the cross. This is the wisdom of God no-one needs a brilliant mind or a university education to know God and attain to eternal life neither do they need to attend a Bible college since the message of the cross states:

- A perfect man gave his life as a ransom for the imperfect, whoever believes that Christ died and rose again and trust in him for their right standing before God will be saved to eternal life.

It is also difficult for those who are wise in their own eyes to accept the message of the cross because it states:

- Sinners are saved by grace and not by self-effort or good works.

This is enormously difficult for a self-righteous person who considers themselves wise to accept as they count themselves righteous because of their good conduct, whereas the message of the cross states:

- It is our faith God counts as our righteousness and not our own self-effort or good works.

Thus God's great wisdom and power is manifested in Christ crucified, firstly by the majestic glory and truth that the way to salvation and eternal life is by faith, not a great education or brilliant I.Q. or even self-effort and secondly by the awesome power God displayed in raising a human man from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory never to see death again, in these two things the wisdom and power of God are manifested in the cross.

The foolishness and weakness of God: obviously the words, "The Foolishness God" does not mean God is foolish, rather it refers to the point of view of those who are wise in their own eyes, to them God appears foolish since they cannot grasp the simplicity of God's great wisdom manifested in the cross (the death and resurrection of Christ) and the message it carries. While the words, "The weakness of God" carries the idea that mankind (especially the prideful) consider the message of the cross as being weak, they consider a King who surrenders his life to his enemies without putting up a fight as being the ultimate act of weakness. Consider for a moment that Christ's crucifixion took place during the time of Rome and the Caesars, who were exalted for conquering their enemies and not surrendering to them, thus the reason the cross appears to the natural mind to be weakness, since even in the world today it is those who win wars, those who are at the top of the business world or the enormously rich and famous etc., that are counted as great. The natural mind esteems and exalts success not failure and therefore when a prideful and self-righteous person looks at the cross, they simply see failure, but for those who respond to its call it is the power of God that sets mortal humans free from eternal death and saves them to eternal glory and everlasting life. The wisdom of God is that salvation begins with a right heart attitude i.e., humbleness contrasted to pride and acknowledging our sinful dysfunctions and aberrations contrasted to being self-righteous which means two things:

1. No matter how great the success someone may have in this life or how much good a self-righteous person may do if they do not accept the message of the cross, they cannot enter God's eternal Kingdom.
2. No matter what wickedness has been done if the sinner embraces the message of the cross in humbleness and repentance, they will be granted forgiveness and through faith in Christ entry into God's everlasting Kingdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

God chose what is Foolish in the World to Shame the Wise.

- **1 Corinthians 1:26-31:** therefore consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low (poor and humble) and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are ²⁹so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Foolish: in this context does not mean stupid, but refers to those who are prideful, conceited self-righteous and to those who consider themselves wise and with contempt looks upon those who believe the Gospel as foolish.

Weak: in this context does not mean weak in strength (though it can include that) but primarily refers to those that are poor, to those do not come from noble homes and those who have no great social status in their communities.

When Paul reminds those in the Corinthian church that prior to their calling not many had a brilliant education, possessed great wisdom, held principal roles of authority or came from noble families the key words are, "According to worldly standards," Since now they are in the body of Christ they are born into a noble family, they do have great wisdom and also great authority, since they now have the words of eternal life. From the world's perspective and wisdom, they look foolish, but from God's heavenly perspective they have great wisdom, because they embraced and believed the Good News of the Gospel which saves them to eternal glory and everlasting life.

God chose, things that are not to bring to nothing things that are: the words, "God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (v28) The phrase, "Even things that are not" refers to good people that are considered by the world's standards as valueless and worthless because of their poverty while the words, "Things that are" refers to those who are prideful and rich i.e., those who by the world standards appear to have everything.

No human can boast in the presence of God: God made the Lord Jesus Christ every believers wisdom because they embrace and believe his words, their righteousness because of their faith, their sanctification because God counts them holy by faith in Christ, their redeemer because Christ paid the price to deliver them from the law of sin and death which states:

- The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).

This means the law of sin and death has no power to hold those who believe in Christ and faithfully follow him in the kingdom of death. This is the reason neither the rich nor the poor can boast that they attained their own salvation, because God is the eternal source of every believer's life, through their faith in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: the poor in Christ should never despise the rich of this world since it is far more difficult for a wealthy person who has the luxuries of this world to enjoy to, come to Christ than it is for someone who has nothing. Added to this no-matter how difficult this life is for a brother or sister in Christ at the end of it we have eternal life in everlasting glory whereas the rich without God simply have death.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
