

SOME FOUNDATIONAL FACTS

1 CORINTHIANS 01:01–03

Introduction

This is the introduction of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. This passage contains only three verses but they are powerful. They cover some *foundational facts* which are absolutely essential to grasp when dealing with the messenger of God and a problem church — division and moral corruption within the church.

- I. The messenger (v. 1).
- II. The local church (vv. 2-3).

I. 1 Corinthians 01:01 Call of Ministers

The messenger is a messenger of Christ, not of himself nor of anyone else.

1. The messenger of Christ is called by God’s will. It is God who calls men and women to serve Him, not the men and women who choose to serve God. Paul was *called by God* to be an apostle, which means he was appointed by God to be a *messenger*, a *witness*, a *missionary* to carry the gospel of Christ to men.

The stress is this: the messenger’s call and appointment comes from God, not from men. No man — neither himself nor any other man — puts him into the ministry. God alone chooses and calls him. In Paul’s particular case, some of the Corinthian believers were questioning and denying his call by God (1 Cor. 9:1-2; cp. 2 Cor. 10:10). Note that the very first words written by Paul are the declaration of his call by God.

John 15:16 “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*”

2 Cor 5:20 *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Gal 1:1 *Paul, an apostle — sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.*

Gal 1:11-12 *I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

Psa 40:8 “*I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*”

Isa 6:8 *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

2. The messenger of God is called to be a brother to other believers. Note that Paul called Sosthenes *our brother*, which means he was a brother in Christ. Sosthenes was probably one of the men sent by the Corinthian church to deliver their letter to Paul —
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the letter which asked Paul the questions that he answers here in First Corinthians. It is interesting to note that Sosthenes may also have been the ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, the ruler who had taken the lead in having Paul arrested and tried. But note: Sosthenes was himself taken and beaten by the Roman governor because he dared to bother the busy schedule of the courts with such an insignificant matter as preaching (Acts 18:12-17). If Sosthenes was the same as the ruler of the synagogue, he was at some point converted to Christ.

The point is this: the messenger of God is called by God, but his call does not make him better or superior to other believers. His call and office as a messenger of God is to be acknowledged and respected, but it does not make him a superior person. He is a *brother* to all other believers.

Rom 12:3 *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Phil 2:3-4 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

II. **1 Corinthians 01:02–03** *The Local Church*

The local church is addressed by Paul. Paul's introduction to the church is revealing because it points out just what a church is.

1. The local church is born of God: it is "the church of God, in Corinth"; that is, it is *God's church* in a particular city or locality. The church is not the church of Corinth or of any other city; it is the church which has been given birth by God; therefore, it belongs to God.

Acts 20:28 *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

Eph 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

Titus 2:14 *[Christ] Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

John 3:3 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."*

Thought 1. The church is *the church of God*. The church belongs to God, not to any man or to any group of people. Too often some leader or some group of people within a church begins to act like they own the church, as though the church exists to do their will. Such behaviour is dangerous to both the church and to those who act as though they own the church. It will destroy the fellowship and ministry and usefulness of a local church, and it will lead to severe punishment for those who set themselves up as the owners of the church. Why? Because God will not share His glory with any self-centred, arrogant person who works to destroy His church. The church is God's and God's alone.

Isa 42:8 *“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”*

Isa 48:11 *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.*

- 2 The local church and its believers are set apart in Christ and called holy. The word “sanctified” means *to be set apart or separated* (see *Sanctify*, 1 Cor. 1:2). God's church is to be set apart and separated unto Him. The idea is that believers are not to be taken out of the world, but they are to be different from the world. Their life-style and purpose in life are to be different. They are to live holy lives and to no longer love the world or touch the unclean things of the world.

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

1 Pet 1:14-15 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.*

1 John 2:15-16 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.*

- a. Note how a church and its believers *become sanctified to God*. They are set apart to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. No person can approach God — no person can ever be set apart to God — except through the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 1:15 *Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.*

1 Tim 2:5 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

1 John 4:14 *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

John 4:42 *They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

Acts 4:12 *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Heb 7:25 *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

b. Note that believers are called “*to be holy*.”

3 The local church and its believers are identified with all other believers (see *Saints*, 1 Cor. 1:2). The church is universal. There is no exclusiveness, no superiority in the church of God — not in the true church. There may be caste systems and levels of superiority in some churches that dishonour the name of Christ and in the man-made religions of the world, but not in the true church of God. This was a problem in the Corinthian church. Some were claiming to be superior and to have a more special relationship to Christ than others. Super-spirituality and pride were seeping into the lives of some — to such a point that the whole fellowship of the church was being threatened (cp. 1 Cor. 1:12; 2 Cor. 10:7).

Thought 1. Super-spirituality and pride have no place in God’s church. There is only One who is to be honoured and exalted: Christ Jesus our Lord. All believers, no matter how low or how high their position and station in life, are the subjects of Christ and not the lords of other believers.

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism.”

Rom 12:2 *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Rom 14:4 *Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

4. The local church and its believers experience grace and peace.
- a. Grace means the favour of God. It means all the good and perfect gifts of God, all the good and beneficial things He gives to us and does for us, whether physical, material or spiritual (Jas. 1:17). (See *Grace*, 1 Cor. 1:4.)

Rom 3:24 *And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Eph 2:7 *In order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Phil 4:19 *And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

1 Tim 1:14 *The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

Titus 2:11 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

Titus 3:7 *So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

- b. Peace is the result or fruit of God's favour: peace with God and peace with men. When a man receives the grace of God, he is immediately reconciled to God and man. He is given fellowship with God and a love for all other men.

John 14:27 *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Rom 5:1 *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Note that both grace and peace come only from *God our Father* and from the *Lord Jesus Christ*. They are the only source of grace and peace. If a man wishes to receive the favour of God and to have the peace of God reigning in his heart and life, he has to come to God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:36 *You know the message God sent to the people of Israel [and the world], telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.*

2 Cor 5:19 *That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

Eph 2:14 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.*

Col 1:20 *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Isa 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ■*

1 CORINTHIANS 01:02 SANCTIFY, SANCTIFICATION (HAGIAZO)

*To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours: **1 Corinthians 01:02***

The word “sanctify” means to be set apart, to be separated (cp. 1 Pet. 1:15-16). There are three stages of sanctification.

1. There is initial or positional sanctification. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is immediately set apart for God. This is a permanent, once-for-all act (Heb. 3:1; cp. Heb. 10:10).
2. There is progressive sanctification. The true believer makes a determined and disciplined effort to allow the Spirit of God to set him apart day by day. The Spirit of God takes him and conforms him to the image of Christ more and more. This growth takes place as long as the believer walks upon this earth (cp. Jn. 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:25-26; 1 Th. 5:23-24).
3. There is eternal sanctification. The day is coming when the believer will be perfectly set apart unto God and His service — without any sin or failure whatsoever. That day will be the great and glorious day of the believer’s eternal redemption (Eph. 5:27; 1 Jn. 3:2). □

1 CORINTHIANS 01:02 SAINTS, HOLY (HAGIOIS)

The word means set apart, consecrated and sacred. A saint or holy person is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who has been set apart to live for God. The saint has given himself to live a consecrated, sacred and holy life — all for the glory of God. Note that believers are *saints* in both senses:

1. Believers are *saints or holy* in the sense that they have been given a new heart by God: a heart that is renewed and recreated in righteousness and true holiness.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2. Believers are *saints or holy* in the sense that they are set apart to live consecrated and holy lives in this world.

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

1 Pet 1:14-15 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. □*

