

Paul the Apostle wrote 13 or 14 letters, (depending if you count Hebrews as one of his). Two of the longest were the two to the assembly of God at Corinth. They are both largely instructive, reproof and corrective regarding personal conduct, moral uprightness and assembly order, rather than taking up doctrinal issues as those to Ephesus, Colosse and Galatia. He uses his title and authority as **Apostle** for there were serious problems reported in the assembly at Corinth that needed attention. They also had written him with some questions which he answers in the letter. The Holy Spirit uses the occasion to minister to their spiritual needs. He then preserved these inspired epistles for our benefit, to mark out God's will, to prevent us from making the same mistakes they made, and to show is the way out if we should repeat their foolishness. **We** have no excuse, for we have in the written word of God what they did not yet have at their disposal. Listen and learn well. God has not bound us to merely learn by hard knocks (experience). We can avoid the mistakes of the past by faith, simply heeding the instructive words of Scripture. Above all we need to faithfully to cling to the Lord as Head of the Assembly collectively (that is, together as a local assembly). To do this we must first personally continually cling to Him. The path is clearly marked out. Now follow it!

As was his custom, Paul begins His letter with a loving greeting: grace, mercy and peace, and quickly turns their thoughts to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God the Father. Christ is referred to 11 times. He begins from the solid foundation of Christ, but he is concerned most with how we are carrying out the eternal life that is now ours. This is not a solitary life but one of fellowship, particularly "of His Son Jesus Christ the Lord" (verse 9). This speaks to our unity with other believers in the local assembly and worldwide. So this letter pointedly includes:

...all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (v. 2) .

Many believers today squirm a little at some of the instructions to us in Paul's letters to the Corinthians, trying to find excuses for ignoring them. Some say scripture is "culture bound," relevant to them but not us. Some say it is "time bound," relevant then but not now. Some say it was "locale bound," meant only for the Corinthians. Sorry! It's none of these! It is "us bound," so to speak. It directly applies to us! Here! Now! In America! To the Church of God which is at Ramsey! To us at Trott Brook! Well, we're not really "sorry" that it is for us. What a joy and privilege to have God's very word and will written out and preserved for us today, and the Holy Spirit indwelling us personally to guide, and the Lord in our midst to lead. It's for those "in every place" and those who "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." If you call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ it is for you. There is no latitude to ignore, or

any hint of a "take it or leave it" permissiveness in Paul's statement here!

He addresses them (and us) as "**sanctified** in Christ Jesus, **called** [to be] **saints**." That is, our position in Christ Jesus is that of having been "sanctified," set apart, holy, belonging to Him. We don't become saints by being godly and good and "saintly." We are said to have been called to that calling by God Himself. Eternal security is ours. There is no hint of our eternal destiny being in question. That is fixed for each of us who have trusted Christ. This is precious because he is about to confront them with many issues that needed correction.

Then he reminds them of the grace that God has bestowed upon them by Jesus Christ. *That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and [in] all knowledge; (v .5).* They were richly blessed with the ability to express themselves clearly and eloquently and with deep and stimulating knowledge. It far surpasses mere human knowledge so valued by the Greeks of that day (and by many today as well). This knowledge was the "testimony of Christ" and was confirmed (established) in them (and us). Furthermore, they had spiritual gifts among them. **All** of the possible gifts were there! Not just some. See chapter 12 for a partial list. And they were not just spiritually gifted but very richly spiritually gifted. We will see that they were misusing these free gifts for their own glory and Paul will rebuke them for this. Why? Love wasn't active! Note that while he extols God's grace in gifting them there is no mention of their love. Why? Perhaps it was not obvious enough that he could commend it? How sad!

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This lack is what leads to the famous "Love chapter," Chapter 13. It follows instructions on use of their gifts in chapter 12 and precedes the best way given in chapter 14, that of prophesying in the assembly.

Next he reminds them that all these blessings were for their use, and enjoyment, while awaiting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They seem to have lost sight of this event also in their delight over their spiritual gifts. They were to be used for Him under the guidance of the Spirit. Paul handles this lack in chapter 15. The expressions "coming of our Lord" and "day of Jesus Christ" implies His coming in judgement rather than the secret rapture they were to be expecting first. Yes, He is faithful and will confirm them (and us) to this Day. We won't lose out personally then, we will be **blameless** then. What grace! But we may lose what we have done, if we don't tend to business. He speaks to that in chapter 3. So these first nine verses are a neat introduction to the earnest talk that is to follow.

By Ron Canner, September 18, 2002