

Journey Into Biblical Problem Solving

LESSON 1 . . . Benefits of Being a Believer (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

NOTES

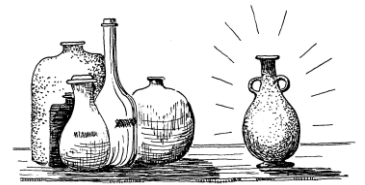
Do you have a relationship problem? Trouble finding your spiritual gift? People-skill problems? Conflict in your church, school, or workplace? Confusion about public worship? Studying *1 Corinthians* can help you solve your problems in all these areas. The key verse of this epistle is 1 Corinthians 1:10, in which Paul makes an *appeal* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you (1:10a-b). Then, what does Paul write (1:10c)?

This letter was written by Paul in A. D. 55 to the church in the seaport city of Corinth. The most important city in Greece, Corinth had a population of about 500,000. It was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, following Rome in Italy, Ephesus in Galatia, and Antioch in Syria (see map on page 10). Paul wrote this letter about four years after founding the church on his second missionary journey (Acts 18). Corinth had a reputation for great wealth, vice, and immorality, which makes it much like America today. After Paul left, all kinds of problems developed in the church, so the Corinthians wrote Paul for advice. Therefore, this letter is a very practical guide, filled with biblical principles for solving all kinds of problems. Paul begins this letter by writing about **three** benefits of being a believer.

1. Sanctification (1:1-3)

This letter begins with the same format we see when we receive an email: “**From,**” “**To,**” and “**Subject.**” (I think this format must have been copied from Paul.) The letter begins: *Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes* [Sos´-thuh-knees] (1:1). Paul identifies himself as *an apostle* (APOSTOLOS, ah-pos´-to-los), which means one sent forth with a message. This identifies him as a messenger and representative of the Lord. The *brother* named *Sosthenes* was probably Paul’s scribe, or secretary, who wrote down this letter to the Corinthians as Paul dictated it. Sosthenes was probably the former leader of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth. When Paul is attacked while teaching in a synagogue at Corinth, what does Acts 18:17a-b record?

Apparently, Sosthenes later becomes a believer, so Paul mentions his name because he is well-known in Corinth. Now that we have the “**From**,” Paul moves to the “**To**”: *To the church of God that is in Corinth* (1:2a). This tells us to whom the *church* belongs: *God!* The true church is made up of *those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints* (1:2b). The word *sanctified* means set apart from sin for God’s use. The word translated *saints* (HAGIOS, hag’-ee-os) means “holy ones.” Being *sanctified* and holy means you are committed to obeying what command in 1 Peter 1:15?



Not obeying that command will cause many problems in life.

Paul writes this letter not only to the believers at Corinth, but also to us today. He writes: *to all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours* (1:2c).

There are other benefits of being *sanctified*. Therefore, Paul writes: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:3). The order of these words is very important. *Grace* is God’s unmerited, or undeserved, favor. *Peace* is the result of experiencing divine grace. It refers to having divine, inner tranquility, regardless of outward circumstances. How is this *peace* described in Philippians 4:7b-c?

The **benefits of being a believer** include: **sanctification** and . . .

2. Transformation (1:4-6)

The believers at Corinth were experiencing all kinds of problems. One principle we should always use when trying to resolve people problems is the “sandwich approach.” This means you begin with a compliment, then address the problem, and end with another compliment. That’s what Paul does. The church at Corinth has been a real “pain,” but the loving apostle Paul can honestly write, *I give thanks to my God always for you* (1:4a). Few things can help resolve problems with people as much as honestly thanking God for them. This forces us to focus on their good points.

Paul can thank God for them *because of the grace of God that was given them in Christ Jesus* (1:4b). Paul has already used the word *grace* in reference to salvation, but here it refers to all God’s undeserved blessings *in Christ*. A great way to remember the meaning of the word *grace* is the

acrostic: **G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense. Another is: **G**enuinely **R**e-deemed **A**nd **C**leansed **E**ternally. All our blessings are completely undeserved, but because of His *grace*, God blesses us anyway.

Paul continues: *that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge* (1:5). We are *enriched* by God's *grace* in many ways. The word translated *speech*, or "utterance," (LOGOS, log'-os) means to speak God's truth. We all have the ability to speak God's truth well enough to accomplish God's will for our lives. Because of God's *grace*, every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. What does Paul write in Romans 5:5b?

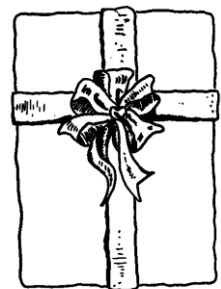
God doesn't want us to speak out of ignorance. Therefore, because of God's *grace*, we have also been *enriched by knowledge*. This refers to a personal knowledge of Jesus. But, how do you know if you **really** know Jesus in a personal way? If you obey His commandments (1 Jn 2:3).

Paul is also thankful because *the testimony about Christ was confirmed among* the Corinthian believers (1:6). This means the preaching and teaching of the Gospel had transformed their lives. It really works!

The **benefits of being a believer** include: **sanctification, transformation,** and . . .

3. Participation (1:7-9)

God gives us spiritual gifts to prepare us for ministry. Paul puts it like this: *so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:7). This tells us what God wants us to do until Jesus returns. We are to use our spiritual gifts to carry on the mission and ministry God has given each of us. The word translated *gift* (CHARISMA, car'-is-mah) is the word from which we get our word "charisma." It means "grace gift" because spiritual gifts are received solely by God's *grace*. How does Romans 12:6a express this fact?



Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, many of which we will talk about later in this study. All spiritual gifts are given by grace, not merit. God has given every church various members who together have all the spiritual gifts needed to carry out the mission and ministries He desires for that particular church.

As we use our spiritual gift, God *will sustain us to the end* (1:8a). Because of His grace, God prepares us to be what He wants us to be and to accomplish what He wants us to accomplish. This is a great promise of security in Christ. In other words, God will finish what He begins in our lives. Of what does Philippians 1:6b say we can be confident?



God will keep us strong to the end so we will be *guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1:8b). When Christ returns, He will declare us *guiltless*, or “blameless,” before our heavenly Father. He will present His church to the Father *without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish* (Eph. 5:27). Therefore, we are totally secure in Christ because *God is faithful* (1:9a). Because *God is faithful*, what will He do, according to 2 Thessalonians 3:3b?

Paul continues: *by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1:9b). The word translated *fellowship* (KOINŌNIA, coin-o-knee'-ah) includes partnership and participation. We are not just spectators in the kingdom; we are participants. God has gifted us and will *sustain* us so we can participate in His work.

The **benefits of being a believer** include: **sanctification, transformation, and participation.**