

September 10, 2017

Who is Paul, and who are the Corinthians?

1 Cor 1:1-3

Who is Paul?

1. An Apostle:

a. An office of the church

- i. Called and commissioned personally by the Lord Jesus Christ to carry His message

1. Distinction between the 12 apostles and the 12 disciples

- a. The disciples were chosen to follow Jesus during his ministry and one was specifically chosen to follow and then to betray -- in other words Judas Iscariot was never an apostle
- b. Apostles were not only hand selected to follow Jesus and his teaching but were also commissioned or appointed by Jesus to lead the Church and carry the Gospel message to the world

i. Only 12 Men in History fit this criteria

- 1. Judas was chosen to be a disciple but was never given the Holy Spirit and
- 2. He was not commissioned to as an Apostle
- 3. Matthias (Acts 1:12ff) chosen by the apostles and not by Jesus to be an apostle though he had walked with Jesus he was not an Apostle
- 4. Paul though he did not walk with Jesus was personally selected and commissioned by Jesus (Acts 9) and was personally taught by Jesus (what I received Cor 15:3, 11:23) (Gal 1:1) "an apostle not from man or by men but through Jesus Christ and God the Father"

- b. By Establishing his apostleship, Paul is declaring this letter to be official and authoritative

2. Who is Sosthenes

- a. Believed to be the same man who was the Synagogue leader in Corinth while Paul was there (acts 18)

- i. Paul is in Corinth and he's ministering to the Jews and he's getting nowhere so he shakes out his garments and goes to the Gentiles -- received by Titius Justus who lived next door to the synagogue

- ii. The then ruler of the synagogue also believes in the Lord Jesus
- iii. Later in the story the Jews are so fed up with Paul's teaching that they try to take him before Gallio the proconsul of the area who throws the case out and the now leader of the synagogue, Sosthenes, is beaten in front of the tribunal
 - 1. Some accounts say that the Non-jewish city officials beat him for bothering them with a silly case -- other accounts say that the Jews beat him because he did not represent them well and got the case thrown out
- b. Some have also said that he might be Paul's amanuensis
- c. I believe the reason he is mentioned is that he is a man who has held a position of authority among the Corinthians and so Paul is including him to add weight to this letter.

Who are the Corinthians?

- 1. Background
 - a. Corinth sits on the Peloponnesian side of the Isthmus (land Bridge) that connects the two major bodies of the Greek mainland
 - b. The isthmus is about 4 miles wide and has port cities on either side where ships would be put in and hauled over the four mile stretch to avoid the treacherous 250 mile journey around the cape.
 - c. Corinth sits in the center of this narrow stretch of land at the base of a 2000 foot high granite mound which was known as the Acrocorinth (high corinth) and was the sight of the fortress- temple of the patron goddess of sensual love and fertility, Aphrodite. There are accounts that as many as 1000 temple prostitutes were employed to honor this deity and fill her coffers
 - d. So you have a major trade center for both land and sea that is home to one of the greatest deities in pagan culture who was worshipped primarily through fornication -- as such every indulgence that could make "worship" of this deity more pleasurable was endorsed in Corinth earning it the reputation among ancient cities as the quintessential expression of self indulgence
- 2. Among these people God places His church
 - a. We must understand that this letter is not written to the church of Corinth, but to the Church of God that is in Corinth
- 3. Categories for those who make up the Church are given
 - a. "Those sanctified by Christ Jesus"
 - i. Sanctified -- those set apart
 - 1. Sanctification is the process of setting apart-- meaning removing you from your sin into his righteousness
 - b. "Called to be saints"
 - i. A saint is not someone who has lived a righteous life or sime some great work and has been recognized for it by the church -- A saint is a person who has been called by Jesus and have responded in faith

1. Like the sheep who know the shepherd's voice and comes to Him
Jesus has called his own and they have come.
 2. You are a Saint
- c. Declare Jesus to be Lord
- i. Those who call on the name of the our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours
 - ii. The sanctified Saint calls Jesus **LORD**
 1. This means master, sovereign, Ruler -- it means he is in charge and so the sanctified saint lives according to how Jesus says to live, according to the will of the master
 - iii. We must note that Paul is writing this letter to correct sin among these people and he calls them all saints. Even though they are known to be engaged in terrible sin and if not engaged in it they are tolerating it - which is sin- and he still says they are saints
 1. This should be encouraging to you and I

Discussion Questions:

- Who is Paul and to whom is he writing? What are their respective backgrounds and what is their history together?
- Why is it significant that Paul wrote this letter to the “Church of God in Corinth?” Does that statement change we read and respond to such a letter?
- How are you different from your old self and the environment you were in when Jesus saved you?
- What do you think of when you hear the word saint? Do you believe yourself to be a saint?
- How is the “lordship” of Christ connected to your sanctification and your identity as a saint? Can these things be separated?