

I CORINTHIANS I

FOUR TRUTHS FOR CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

STUDENT GUIDE

DAILY BIBLE READING

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DAY 3	I CORINTHIANS I: 17-25
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INTRODUCTION TO I CORINTHIANS

First Corinthians is Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, which was one of the great metropolitan cities of the ancient world. God used Paul to establish the church in the city (Acts 18). Corinth was an unlikely field for a successful evangelistic crusade. While it was a hard field in which to minister, great victories were won by God's grace (Acts 18: 9-10). Paul labored in Corinth for 18 months.

OUTLINE

1. **Sanctification (vv.1-9)** - represents both separation (for His service) and consecration (for His glory).

A.) *Position* - Corinthian Christians were called to be different in the midst of corruption. Believers are "called to be saints," and "sanctified in Christ Jesus." Sometimes we complain about where we work, suggesting it is too hard to live a Christian life in such an unchristian environment. Paul's words stand as a gentle rebuke to our complaints.

B.) *Prosperity* - According to the apostle, grace makes us "enriched by him" in everything we do. Most of us, whether we acknowledge it or not, live in the upper crust of the global economy. Unfortunately, far too few of us live in the upper crust of the spiritual economy where Christ's true riches are without limits.

C.) *Promise* - the security of our sanctification is based upon God's faithfulness even when we are not faithful.

Question - *Since as believers we are "in Christ," does that status mean we do not ever act as though we are still "in Adam?"*

(Continued on back)

2. Fragmentation (vv. 10-16) - today's churches are not the only ones to suffer fragmentation or splits. Unfortunately, this news does not stop at the walls of the church.

A.) *Contentions* - This term carries with it the idea of quarrels, wrangling, and strife. Fellow members of Christ's church were arguing with one another in an unbecoming, unchristian manner. Contention is a characteristic of the unsaved person (Romans 1:29). Contention is indicative of rebellion and works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-23).

B.) *Divisions* - A divided church grieves the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing for God to divide the church (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). It is quite another for people to divide the church through quarreling, back-biting, jealousy and the traditions of men.

C.) *Spiritual Mutilation* - The apostle Paul informs the Corinthians that by dividing into factions they have, in essence, divided Christ, mutilating the one body of the Lord Jesus. A church plagued by contention and division not only mutilates the *cross* of Christ (1 Cor. 2:2), but also mutilates the *cause* of Christ.

D.) *Restoration* - Paul was not content to allow the divisive situation to remain. He pleads with the "brethren" to "be perfectly joined together." (v10) Paul used a term often employed for mending fishing nets (Matt. 4:21).

Question: *Do you think church division is a major problem today? Why or why not? Are you aware of any overt problems in your fellowship? If so, make an appointment with the pastor to offer your support in solving the breach in fellowship.*

3. Proclamation (vv. 17-25)

A.) *Word of the cross* - The Gospel is not about human wisdom, but Divine power.

B.) *Wisdom of the cross* - Preaching of the cross exposes human failure.

C.) *Witness of the cross* - For those who believe, it is the power of God.

4. Identification (vv. 26-31)

A.) *Your Calling* - Paul's focus is on our "calling" from God (v. 26). We are a part of God's church because we were called. Remember: *If rebellious sinners are saved at all, God must initiate our rescue.* When God "calls" us through Gospel preaching, the "calling" is God's initiation, not ours.

B.) *Selected / located in Christ* - Because we are selected by Him, we are located in Him (vv. 30-31). Jesus is our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. His righteousness covers our past while His sanctification confirms our present, freeing us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Wrap Up: Four overarching truths make up the first chapter Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation. Our sanctification cannot be expressed through unhealthy divisions in the church. A fractured fellowship mutilates the body of Christ. Rather through proclamation of the simple but saving message of Christ's cross, we find a new and stable identity in Him.