LIFE BIBLE MINISTRY

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Opening and word of thanks

Pastor Paul LeBoutillier · April 27, 2026

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

We are starting our study of the book of 1 Corinthians this evening, and this is going to be a good one. I always like going through the book of 1 Corinthians because it is so relevant. The culture that the believers there in Corinth were dealing with and attempting to live for in the midst of was very challenging. Corinth was a center for trade because it was right on the coast. People and ships came from all over and they brought their ways of doing things, their beliefs, their ideologies, their immorality, and it all kind of came together in the place called Corinth.

It was known as a place of immorality. In fact, if you wanted to insult someone back in biblical times, you would call them a Corinthian. It doesn't matter if they'd ever lived there or even had ever set foot on Corinthian soil. To simply call somebody a Corinthian was to insult them in the highest terms and basically say you're an immoral, a sexually immoral person. So in the backdrop of all this sexual immorality that was rampant in Corinth, we have a letter from the Apostle Paul written around AD 55 when he was in Ephesus and he is giving them direction on their lives and how they're going about being the body of Christ in a very, very difficult situation.

Paul planted the church in Corinth. He brought the gospel to this area and now he's writing to them. By the way, this is not his first letter to the Corinthians. I think it's in chapter 5 when he makes reference to a previous letter that he had written to this fellowship. So we think that Paul wrote a total of four letters to the believers in Corinth, two of which we still have today.

Kind of makes you wonder, doesn't it, what was perhaps in those other two letters that we don't have? But in the sovereignty of God, these are the two that we have in the biblical canon and we're going to be getting into these here tonight. Okay, let's get started with verses 1 through 3. Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the

name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are very common forms of greeting that Paul is extending in the first three verses of this letter. Letters back in those days began with the name of the writer and that's why he begins with his own name, Paul. But I want you to notice how he immediately establishes himself. He doesn't just say, Paul. Rather he says, Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle.

Now that is something that Paul would typically do when he was about to be corrective. In other words, if he needed to bring correction and perhaps even a little bit of discipline to a wayward church, and the Corinthian church was certainly that in many ways, Paul would begin by establishing his calling, which included the authority that he now had to say what he was about to say. He wanted them to know that he wasn't just writing them as a man who had an interest in the church. It went beyond that. Paul wanted them to know he was writing as a man who had a calling from the Lord in his apostolic role and the authority that went along with that.

So he said, Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle. I am not in this position, he's telling them. By my own desire, by my own choosing, I am here because the Lord called me here. And I have some hard things that I'm going to say to you, but I want you to pay attention because my position was given by God. This is a very important way for Paul to start this letter.

He says, I am an apostle of Christ Jesus. Now you'll notice that Paul also mentions another writer in this letter, and it's a man he refers to as our brother Sosthenes. The reason Paul usually gave credit to someone else from time to time was because he needed someone to transcribe these letters. We know that Paul had an issue with his eyes. He talks about it in his letter to the churches in Galatia.

And so because I believe that Paul had some sort of issue or disease of the eyes, he needed someone to write for him. And so he would dictate and he would give them the message. And so he's giving credit to that man, Sosthenes, who is writing these things down. It was very common for letters then to reflect the recipient. And that's what Paul goes on to do in verse two, where he says to the church of God that is in Corinth.

But rather than using an impersonal sort of a reference, the church in Corinth, he goes on now to speak about these people, referring to them in some rather interesting ways. He begins by referring to them as those sanctified in Christ Jesus. The word sanctified means set apart. It is a word that describes something that has a special purpose. And in this case, a purpose established by God.

And this word, by the way, applies to you and me as well. Since we are born again, children of God, part of the body of Christ, we belong to him. And he has taken us out of the world, out of the culture in which we live, and he has set us apart. And he basically now says to you and me, you are mine, you are for me, and I'm going to use you in this world. This is a special setting aside of our lives unto God.

You know, I think of it sometimes growing up, my mother had special plates and silverware that we didn't use on a day-to-day basis. It was special. It was set apart. And she would only bring these things out when we had very special guests or perhaps we were having a holiday meal. And then out would come the special dishware and the special silverware.

Those things were set apart. They were sanctified. And that's really what this word means. And again, it applies to you and me. You'll also notice that Paul refers to the believers in Corinth as those who are called to be saints.

And not just the believers in Corinth. He says, together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus, both their Lord and ours. And so he calls them saints. The word saint is similar in a sense to sanctified. In this case, it means holy one.

It is someone who has been given that position of a holy one, a saint by the Lord. And this is a term that applies to all believers. As Paul says here, he says, you are saints and not just you, but all those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Now, if some of you were raised with a tradition based in Roman Catholicism, you might have a different remembrance of what the word saint means. Because the Roman Catholic Church has kind of their own definition.

I mean, they recognize this one, but they also have saints that are given that position because they've achieved certain markers, benchmarks in their lives. That isn't really a biblical way of looking at the word saint. Again, it refers to all believers. If you are in Christ today, you are a saint. And I know some of you are going to feel uncomfortable with that title, and I don't necessarily suggest you go around using it, but the fact of the matter is, it's true that you are a saint regardless of how you may feel.

We use the word saint today usually to describe someone who is very good, very moral, and we might say of that person, oh, he's a saint, you know, but that's kind of our definition. That's really not the biblical definition. You are a saint if you are in Christ today. And then finally, in this last verse of what we're covering in this first study, Paul says grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This again is a typical blessing that Paul gives in his letters.

In most of them, we will find it. And what's interesting is it always comes in the same order. It's always grace and peace. It's never peace and grace. What's interesting about this greeting is it kind of brings an amalgamation of both Grecian and Hebrew greetings.

The Greek part is grace, and it is the Greek word charis, which means unmerited favor. Paul is essentially saying, may you walk in the favor of God. May God favor you, right? It's a blessing that is spoken over someone. May the Lord bless you with his favor.

But the interesting thing about this word charis is it means unmerited favor. In other words, favor that you haven't earned by being a good person, by acting in any sort of a meritorious way. It's simply God's grace or favor that comes to you because he is good and because he loves to bless his children. And so really that's what Paul is wishing upon the believers in Corinth. The blessing and favor of God that comes apart from their actions.

Very important that we understand that. But it isn't just grace. Then he turns to this more Hebrew greeting, which is peace, or if you will, comes from that Hebrew word shalom, and it is simply a blessing, a wish that you would walk in the peace of God and have peace with God. One of the blessings of being a born-again Christian is that we have peace with God. Jesus is our peace.

In fact, he's the Prince of Peace. He has made peace possible through his death on the cross. And what he did for us on the cross, he does for us by his grace. Stay with me now. When the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he explained how we are saved.

He said, for you are saved by grace, grace, unmerited favor through faith. And that means your confidence in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace through faith. And this not of ourselves, he wrote, it is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast. And so our very salvation is based on the grace of God that comes to us through God's unmerited favor.

And so now we have peace with God. Why? Because we no longer have to try to earn his favor. His favor comes to us by his grace, his love, his goodness. There are, unfortunately, a lot of Christians who are doing their level best to live in such a way as to earn God's love and attention.

And maybe they were raised in homes where that's what their parents demanded. If you want to be loved, if you want to be appreciated, then follow the rules, you know. And some of that transfers into people's walk with the Lord. The problem is it doesn't bring peace because they never know if they've done enough. They never know if they've been good enough.

And so they struggle. And they see other Christians who seem to be so free and so happy. And they're wondering, what am I doing wrong? Am I just not living right? Why am I always questioning whether God loves me, whether he cares about me, whether he's listening to my prayers?

What's really going on is they have not yet really come to terms with grace. And by the way, it's possible to be a born-again Christian and still struggle to understand and accept grace. But once a person truly does understand God's unmerited favor in their life, in other words, that they don't have to be good enough to earn it. He just loves them and he will continue to do so. Suddenly freedom comes into their lives and they have a sense of abiding peace.

It's kind of like, I can take a breath. The Lord loves me. The Lord loves me just because. Grace and peace. And that's why those two words always go in that order, because apart from the grace of God, there is no peace.

But with the grace of God, we walk in peace. Okay, let's move on now to verses four through nine. It says, I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Well, this is something that was part of a regular letter back in those days.

But these words are still very important and we can learn so much from them. Notice that Paul begins by saying, I give thanks for you guys all the time. Now remember, this is a corrective letter. Paul's got some things to say here that are going to be hard for them to hear. They've gotten out of order in some respects, and they needed to get back in order.

And Paul's going to deal with that, but he still has a word of encouragement and a word of blessing. And he's still happy that they are in Christ and that they are walking in the grace of God. And that's part of what he says in this. In fact, he says there in verse four, I'm thankful for you guys because of the grace that is obviously been given to you. Now you need to understand something.

In our last study, we talked about grace. We talked about the fact that it is the Greek word charis, and we talked about the fact that it is defined essentially as favor from God that is unearned. In other words, we don't deserve it. We don't earn it. It's simply given to us because of God's goodness and love.

But Paul is using a slightly different meaning here as he's referring to grace in verse four. And what he's referring to here now is the power from God to do, the blessing from God to do. And he talks and says, you've been given grace from God that, and he goes on to explain what he means by that in verse five, that in every way you were enriched in him. And he gets specific here now by saying in all speech and knowledge. So you'll notice that Paul is acknowledging that in their speech and in their knowledge, they are displaying the favor to do, the ability to do.

that God has given to the believers in Corinth. In fact, he goes on to say in verse seven, "'So that you are not lacking in any gift.'" Gifts, specifically here referring to the gifts of the Spirit, which Paul is going to enumerate for us when we get to chapter 12, it'll be a while. But these gifts of the Holy Spirit were operational in the church at Corinth. I mean, they were walking in the gifts of the Spirit, not always in the way they should. And this is the primary area where Paul needed to bring some correction to them in this letter.

He spends quite a bit of time talking about the gifts of the Spirit and the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit. But he's glad that they're operational in that church. Isn't it interesting? Even though the Corinthian church was kind of messing up in certain areas, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Paul never discouraged them. He never came out and said, you know, you guys just need to knock off the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

He didn't do that at all. He didn't reprimand them for wanting to walk in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He wanted them to walk in order. He wanted them to walk properly, but he did not discourage them from the gifts themselves. And here he says, you've been blessed.

You guys have been blessed with grace to walk in knowledge and speech and you lack no gifts. There is such a beautiful work of the Holy Spirit among you and he was happy because of it. He went on to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ, of course, who gives those gifts to the church. And then he begins to speak of one of the important elements of what Jesus does in the life of the believer. It's in verse eight, look in your Bible with me.

Who will sustain you to the end, guiltless. Okay. This is a wonderful promise that is given to us in the word of God. Paul is saying that one of the blessings that Jesus bestows upon born again believers is to sustain them, to give them literally the power to carry on, to keep on keeping on, and not just to keep on, but to get to the end on the day of our Lord Jesus and to present them before the father guiltless. Those words may come as a surprise to some believers because they are operating under the idea that this is something they have to do on their own.

They have to work hard and they have to try hard to stay pure so that when they stand before God, all of their sins aren't splashed up on some huge big screen. You know, one of the things I've liked to say to believers over the years is this. When you stand before God one day at the end of this life, and if he brings up one sin that you've committed, then what Jesus did on the cross wasn't enough. The fact of the matter is, what Jesus did on the cross was enough. And what he did for you is he bore the penalty of your sin in such a way that when he was finished bearing your sin, he declared victoriously, it is finished.

Words that literally mean paid in full. Jesus paid in full the penalty of your sin, past, present, and future. So you see, when you stand before God, you are not gonna stand and hear about all the sins that you've committed. The Bible tells us, even in the Old Testament, that under this new covenant that we live under, he will remember our sins no more. Isn't that incredible?

That's what Paul is saying here to you and me. Jesus is the one who sustains us to the very end that we might be presented guiltless before the father. Ah, that is such incredible good news. And I trust that if there are any who are watching and going through this study with me, if you've been struggling with this whole idea of I've gotta do better because I wanna make sure that God doesn't point out any of my sins. Well, listen, there's nothing wrong with wanting to do better, but your sins are under the blood of Jesus Christ.

As you come to him, as you confess, that restores that relationship. And you can know without a shadow of doubt that your sins are forgiven. They are taken care of. Jesus took care of them. And why?

Because of what he says in verse nine. God is faithful. By whom you were called into fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. God is faithful. You need to remember that.

In fact, if there's any one particular attribute of God that I find the most comforting, it's this one. God's faithfulness. God is faithful. You can recite that to yourself when you're going through all kinds of difficult challenges, problems, concerns. God is faithful.

God is faithful. And Paul tells us here that he has called us into fellowship with his son. You may not know your specific ministry calling. You may not know what the Lord has for you yet. If you don't, I encourage you to pray about it.

But Paul reveals one calling that's on your life right now that you can know about and you can walk in. And it is the calling to have fellowship with Jesus Christ. He wants to have fellowship with you. He longs to have fellowship with you. James tells us, draw near to the Lord and he will draw near to you.

So I want to encourage you this week, press into your calling, the calling that God has on your life to have fellowship, koinonia, close communion with your Lord, Jesus Christ. That's where we stop for this second study in 1 Corinthians 1. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I want to thank you for the things that we've seen here in just these short verses of chapter one in 1 Corinthians. Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful reminders that are here.

The reminder that we've been called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Thank you, Lord God, for the beautiful statements about the testimony that is ours, that we can show forth the grace of God in gifts and abilities that you have given to each of us. And may we walk in that grace and walk out the things that you've given to us as wonderful gifts. We thank you, Lord, for this word. We thank you for blessing us with the insight from it.

And we pray that you would speak to us about these things throughout the course of this week. And we ask all of these things in the authority that is ours through Jesus, our Savior. Amen.