

Introduction

A couple of weeks ago I was having a discussion with one of the board members of our church, and I mentioned that I was going to preach through 1 Corinthians. He asked me why I was going to go through that particular book. It so happened that earlier that morning I had spent a lot of time meditating on that very question. You may be asking the same question, so I want to spend a few minutes giving you some of the reasons, and it will serve as an overview as we get started.

First, the Paul's first letter to the Corinthians covers a very large number of subjects. One of the topics is church plants, and I did a series of messages on church plants, based on 1 Corinthians 3. Paul discusses Christ being the foundation. That is an extremely important topic. As we plant the Connection Church of Rome, it is apropos to lay the foundation of Christ.

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as infants in Christ and fleshly Christians. It is important to know about spiritual growth and maturity. Our goal is to present every man complete or mature in Christ, so talking about things that help us grow and mature are very important.

Paul speaks about division and unity. Right before Christ died, he prayed what is known as the priestly prayer, and He prayed that the church would be one, as He and the Father are One. God wants His body to be of one mind and one spirit. If Jesus thought unity was important, we should consider discussions on unity to be very valuable.

Paul spoke about leadership. He said that he and Apollos were just servants that had been given an opportunity. He spoke about stewardship and faithfulness. All churches need to develop leaders, and not just leaders, but servant leaders. These are fruitful discussions.

The Corinthian church, like most churches, had some issues with sin and immoral behavior. Paul's discussions about dealing with sin in the church are extremely important. God wants His body to be pure, without spot or wrinkle. He wants the church to know how to deal with sin in the church, so these discussions are important.

Much of the information that we have about the principles of church membership are found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The discussions are interspersed throughout the letter. Without an understanding of church membership, his teachings about church discipline cannot be understood and applied.

Paul discusses marriage and divorce. With nearly half of marriages ending in divorce, his discussions on marriage and divorce are very relevant and helpful. Paul also addresses spiritual covering and headship in the home and in the church. We live in a day where spiritual authority is not understood, and people are rejecting authority of any kind, whether it is in the police, government, home, or church.

Paul discusses giving and the remuneration of God's servants. Those that sow spiritually are to reap materially. We are not to muzzle the ox while it is threshing.

Two of the most-used passages about the Lord's Supper are Matthew 26 and in 1 Corinthians 10-11. We get more understanding about how the Lord's Supper was to be taken corporately in the passage in Corinthians. Paul received some special revelation from the Lord about the Lord's Supper and he gave us this revelation in this letter to the Corinthians.

Paul told the Corinthians that he did not want them to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. Many people in the church are ignorant about spiritual gifts. It is important for people to understand gifts, manifestations, and ministries. It is important for people to know their role and ministry in the body. In Ephesians 4 Paul said that the body will not grow or come to maturity until every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part. God wants His church to be built up and to be mature, so the discussions on spiritual gifts are essential.

(Eph 4:15–16) “but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, {16} from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Paul said if we had all the gifts, but were without love, we would be just a noisy gong and they would not profit us. God wants us to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy and the gifts that edify the entire body, but without love they are nothing. 1 Corinthians 13 is a classic passage about love. It is used in marriage counseling, wedding ceremonies, and many other venues. Christians are supposed to be known by their love, and this letter to the Corinthians is unparalleled.

The resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the gospel message. Paul’s discussion on resurrection, and what happens when we die is badly needed. I get so many questions from people about what happens to believers when they die, so his teaching on this topic is very relevant and helpful. Many sermons preached at funerals use this letter as the text.

As you can see, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is rich in content and covers a wide assortment of key subjects. I am excited about going through this book with you, and I hope this brief overview has wetted your appetite.

This morning, we will be covering Part 1 of Paul’s introduction, which is the first verse of the letter. Paul identifies himself as the author. In Part 2, we will look at who the letter is addressed to, and the greeting that Paul gives.

Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 1:1-3)

1. Author(s) of the letter (Part 1)
 - a. Sosthenes
 - b. Paul
 - i. Paul’s personal life
 - ii. Paul’s apostolic calling
2. Recipient of the letter (Part 2)
3. Greeting (Part 2)

(1 Cor 1:1–3) “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, {2} To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: {3} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. **Author(s) of the letter** (1 Cor 1:1)

The letter begins by stating that it is from Paul and Sosthenes. Paul dictated his letters to someone and that person would write the letter for him. Then, he would personally sign the letters to authenticate the letter. In the closing of this letter, Paul wrote, “The greeting is in my own hand – Paul.”

(1 Cor 1:1) “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”

(1 Cor 16:21) “The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.”

In Paul’s second letter to the church in Thessalonica, he wrote, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.” Even though Paul includes Sosthenes, it was most likely that Paul is the author and Sosthenes was the one that physically wrote it for Paul

(2 Thess 3:17) “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.”

This letter from Paul is actually his second of several letters that he wrote to the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 5:9, we find that Paul had written an earlier letter to them telling them not to associate with sexually immoral people. An earlier letter clearly tells us that this is not his first letter, and is probably his second letter. The church today is full of immoral people, and we have accepted worldly ways and standards rather than God’s standards.

(1 Cor 5:9) “I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;”

In 2 Corinthians 2:3-4, Paul wrote that he had written them with many tears. Many scholars believe that he is referring to a third letter, and 2 Corinthians is actually the fourth letter. I have always thought that Paul was referring to 1 Corinthians, not another letter. I believe Paul wrote 1 Corinthians with many tears and anguish of heart. I believe that Paul was grieving over the immorality and division that existed in the church at Corinth. In any case, Paul wrote three or four letters to the Corinthians.

(2 Cor 2:3–4) “This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all. {4} For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.”

a. **Sosthenes**

I want to take a quick look at the lives of these two men, and I will start with Sothenes. He is only mentioned twice in the Bible, here and in Acts 18, when Paul was in Corinth. The Jews rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat. Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia, listened to their charges, and then said, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.” Then, Gallio drove them away from the judgment seat. The Jews were pretty upset that their

charges were not accepted by Gallio so they took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of those things. So, we gather from this that Sosthenes was the leader of the synagogue.

(Acts 18:12–17) “But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat, {13} saying, “This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” {14} But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you; {15} but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves; I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters.” {16} And he drove them away from the judgment seat. {17} And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.”

I am going to speculate a little bit here. Earlier in Acts 18, Luke wrote that Crispus was the leader of the synagogue. After hearing Paul preach the gospel, Crispus believed in the Lord, with all of his household. Many other Corinthians heard, believed, and were baptized. Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months teaching the word of God among them. During that time Crispus was probably removed by the Jews from being the leader since he was now following Christ. Then, they probably made Sosthenes the new leader of the synagogue. It could be that this incident where he was beaten caused him to reflect on things, and what Crispus, Paul and others were saying, and became a believer. Paul was in Corinth sometime between 50 AD and 52 AD. He wrote this letter to the Corinthians about 56 AD. During those four to six years, Sosthenes became a believer, and then started traveling with Paul.

(Acts 18:8–11) “Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized. . . . {11} And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”

Paul and Sosthenes were in Ephesus when this letter was written. In 1 Corinthians 16 Paul shared his plans on going to Corinth. He intended to go to them and spend the winter with them. He did not want to pass through; he wanted to spend an extended amount of time with them. Then, in verse eight Paul wrote, “But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” Paul did not just preach the gospel; he made disciples. Paul poured himself into people and raised up sons like Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Onesimus, and many others.

(1 Cor 16:5–9) “But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; {6} and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. {7} For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. {8} But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; {9} for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

b. Paul

Let’s take a look at Paul’s life and calling.

i. Paul's personal life

We do not have the exact dates of Paul's birth and death, but theologians place his birth around 3 A.D., about the same time as Christ. His death took place between 64 A.D. and 68 A.D. Paul grew up in the town of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 9:11).

(Acts 9:11) "And the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,"

He was an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5-6). He was circumcised on the eighth day and describes himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews." Paul was a Pharisee and a son of Pharisees (Acts 23:6).

(Phil 3:5-6) "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; {6} as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."

(Acts 23:6) "But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!""

Paul was a single man. In 1 Corinthians 7, he addresses the widows and unmarried folks. He tells them that he wishes all men were like him, i.e., single. Later on, in 1 Corinthians 9, when he defends his apostleship to the Corinthians, he asks some rhetorical questions, including the question about having the right to take along a believing wife, as the rest of the apostles.

(1 Cor 7:7-8) "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. {8} But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I."

(1 Cor 9:5) "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?"

Paul's personal appearance was not impressive, and his speech contemptible (2 Cor 10:10). Here is a description of Paul given by someone in the 2nd century. "...a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, well-built, with eyebrows meeting, rather long-nosed, full of grace. For sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes he had the countenance of an angel." Despite his looks and speech, Paul did not consider himself inferior in any way to the other apostles (2 Cor 11:5-6). He states, "but even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge."

(2 Cor 10:10) "For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.""

(2 Cor 11:5-6) "For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. {6} But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things."

Many Bible scholars believe that Paul had very poor eyesight. In Galatians 6, Paul says, "see what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand." People who have poor eyesight would probably write in large letters so that they could read what they had written.

(Gal 6:11) "See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand."

Since Paul grew up the son of a Pharisee, he was brought up in strict accordance with the law from a very early age. He was given a strong Scriptural background by his father. Then, at the age of thirteen, he would have gone through the Bar-Mitzvah, or the coming of age occurs for Jewish boys. Bar Mitzvah literally means "son of the commandment." "Bar" is "son" in Aramaic, which used to be the vernacular of the Jewish people. "Mitzvah" is "commandment" in both Hebrew and Aramaic (Strong's H4687). "Bat" is daughter in Hebrew and Aramaic. Under Jewish Law, children are not obligated to observe the commandments, although they are encouraged to do so as much as possible to learn the obligations they will have as adults. At the age of 13 (12 for girls), children become obligated to observe the commandments. The bar mitzvah ceremony formally marks the assumption of that obligation, along with the corresponding right to take part in leading religious services, to count in a minyan (the minimum number of people needed to perform certain parts of religious services), to form binding contracts, to testify before religious courts and to marry.

At the age of thirteen, Paul's education went to a higher level. He was sent to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel. When Paul gave his testimony to the commander and the people in Jerusalem, he told them in Hebrew that he was a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem. He said that he was educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to law of their fathers. Gamaliel was very well respected by the Jews. We find out more about Gamaliel in Acts 5, when Peter and John were arrested. Gamaliel had Peter and John removed from the room and spoke privately with the Council. He told them to be careful about what they proposed to do with these men. He encouraged them to stay away from these men and leave them alone. He said if Peter and John are from God, they will not be able to overthrow them and will be found to be fighting against God. The Council greatly respected him and took his advice.

(Acts 22:3) ""I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today."

(Acts 5:34) "But a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time."

Paul's strong religious training and background were no mistake. God chose to use Paul to write half of the books of the New Testament. Much of our doctrine for the New Testament was given through Paul. His thorough understanding of both Hebrew and Greek gave him a unique ability to transition us from the Hebrew Old Testament to the Greek New Testament. The following thirteen books of the Bible were written by Paul. Some theologians also attribute Hebrews to him.

Romans	1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians
Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy
2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon	(Hebrews?)	

ii. Paul's apostolic calling

God has a unique call and purpose for all of our lives. In Jeremiah 1, the Lord tells him that He knew him before He formed him in the womb. God consecrated and appointed Jeremiah as a

prophet to the nations before he was even born. Like Jeremiah, Paul was a chosen instrument. In Luke's account of Paul's conversion, the Lord tells Ananias that Paul is a chosen instrument. God tells him that Paul is to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. God had a plan and a purpose for Paul. His family, his upbringing, his education, his personality, and his strengths and weaknesses were not happenstance or a mistake. They were orchestrated by God to achieve His purposes.

(Jer 1:4-5) "Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, {5} "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

(Acts 9:15-16) "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; {16} for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.""

What kind of chosen instrument was Paul? Paul starts this letter out with, "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Paul was an apostle, and like Jeremiah, God had set him apart from his mother's womb.

(1 Cor 1:1) "Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,"

(Gal 1:15-16) But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased {16} to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,"

Paul was referred to as a teacher until Acts 13. The church leadership in Antioch was fasting and ministering to the Lord, and the Holy Spirit told them to set aside Barnabas and Paul for the work that He had for them, which was apostolic ministry. The leadership then fasted about the word that they had heard. After fasting and praying about it, they laid their hands on them, and sent them away. It goes on to say that they were sent out by the Holy Spirit. The word apostle comes from the Greek word, apostolos (Strong's G652), which means, "sent one." From this point on, Barnabas is no longer referred to as a prophet and Paul is not referred to as a teacher; they are called apostles.

(Acts 13:1-4) "Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. {2} And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." {3} Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

(Acts 14:14) "But when the **apostles**, Barnabas and Paul, heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out"

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he stated that he was appointed as a preacher, apostle, and teacher. He still has the gifting of a teacher, but he also has a ministry calling of an apostle.

(1 Tim 2:7) "And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

(2 Tim 1:11) "for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher."

There is a lot of misunderstanding about apostles, so I want to take a few minutes to talk about this calling on Paul's life. In Matthew 10, Jesus chose twelve disciples to be His apostles. He gave them authority over unclean spirits and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Then, He sent them out to the house of Israel, commanding them to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," and to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and to cast out demons. These twelve apostles were given authority for a specific work.

(Matt 10:1–4) "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. {2} Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; {3} Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; {4} Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him."

(Matt 10:5–8) "These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: "Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; {6} but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. {7} "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' {8} "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give."

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the apostles chose another apostle to take his place. We find this account in Acts 1:15-26. (Peter quoted Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8.) The qualification for this apostle was that he must have accompanied Jesus and them, beginning with the baptism of John until the day He was taken up from us, and be a witness of His resurrection.

(Acts 1:20–26) "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.' {21} "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— {22} beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." {23} So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. {24} And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen {25} to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." {26} And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles."

Many teach today that there are no more apostles, because there is no one today that accompanied Jesus and the apostles and witnessed His resurrection. I think it is important to note that there are two categories of apostles. The first category is the apostles of the Lamb. In Revelation 21:14, we see that the New Jerusalem had twelve gates and twelve foundation stones. On each of the foundation stones were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The apostles of the Lamb were those twelve that Jesus appointed in Matthew 10, with the exception of Matthias, who was added in Acts 1.

(Rev 21:14) “And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus and the other apostles mentioned in the New Testament did not accompany Jesus from with His baptism to His resurrection, so they did not meet the qualifications given in Acts 1 for the replacement of Judas. Those qualifications only pertain to the Apostles of the Lamb. But Paul, Barnabas, Timothy and many others were called apostles, even though they did not meet those qualifications. Therefore, when we understand that those qualifications were only for choosing the replacement for the twelfth apostle of the Lamb, we also understand that it does not pertain to Paul and other apostles from that point forward. These other apostles are a second category of apostles. Some people have put a capital “A” for the Apostles of the Lamb and a little “a” for the other apostles. These other apostles were still chosen and called by the Lord. Paul was an apostle by the will of God. There is nothing in this passage that prevents apostles from being called and sent out today.

Some people say that the work of the apostles was to write the New Testament. If that was the case, where are the books that Andrew, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Matthias? Of the twelve apostles, Peter, John, and Matthew are the only ones that God used to write books of the New Testament. Luke wrote two, Luke and Acts, and he was not called an apostle, even though he was on Paul’s apostolic team. John wrote five: John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. Peter wrote two: 1 Peter and 2 Peter. The apostle Paul wrote thirteen and possibly fourteen of the books in the New Testament, but most apostles did not write books of the Bible.

What is the work of an apostle? What did Paul and the other apostles do? Apostles are equippers. In Ephesians 4:11-13, God gave gift ministries to the church, and these gifts were to equip the church for the work of service. So, apostles are a five-fold gift given to the church to equip the church for the work of service.

(Eph 4:11-13) “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; {13} until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Apostles are not just a ministry gift; they are the first or protos gift that God has appointed to the church. The word protos signifies first in time, place, order, importance, or priority. Apostolic ministry is an important ministry to the body of Christ. The church is encouraged to earnestly desire the greater gifts, which would be the apostolic, prophetic, and teaching gifts.

(1 Cor 12:28) "And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues."

Apostles lay foundations. Churches are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We find in Ephesians two that the church, God’s household, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Apostles and prophets are not the foundation. Paul made it very clear in 1 Corinthians that Jesus Christ is the foundation. Jesus is the cornerstone. But the foundation is laid by apostles and prophets. The New Testament pattern is to plant churches with apostles and

prophets. There is still a tremendous need for good foundations to be laid, and for apostolic equipping in churches.

(Eph 2:19-20) "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, {20} having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,"

Here is a list of some of the other work that Paul did and other apostles do:

- Plant and establish new churches (Acts 13-14, 2 Cor 10:13-16, 1 Thess 1:1, 2:9-11)
- Mentor, train, and ordain leaders in churches (Acts 14:23, 15:37, 16:1-4, 1 Cor 4:14-17, 2 Tim 1:2, 2:1-2, Titus 1:4-5, 1 Thess 1:1)
- Establish and protect proper doctrine (1 Tim 1:3-11, Eph 4:11-13, Acts 2:42, Acts 15)
- Settle disputes and controversies (Acts 15:1-35, Eph 4:13)
- Impart spiritual gifts (Rom 1:11)
- Strengthen churches (Acts 15:36-41, 16:4-5, 1 Thess 3:2)
- Bring correction to churches when necessary (1 Cor 4:18-5-13, 2 Cor 13:10, 3 John 1:9-10)

A few years ago, within the same week, I had two young people mentioned to me that they were apostles. They had taken a spiritual gifts test and the test results told them they were apostles. Just because someone fills out a spiritual gift test and they answer particular questions about missions or the church at large does not make them an apostle. The key way of identifying a true apostle is by the work that he does. Paul told the Corinthians that they were the proof of his apostleship. He had planted and established the church, trained and ordained pastors, and provided a spiritual covering for them. These two young people were not doing apostolic work and did not even know what an apostle did.

(1 Cor 9:2) "If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."

Paul was very goal-oriented. Below is a composite statement that I put together based on the following Scriptures: Rom 11:13, Col 1:28-29, 1 Tim 2:7.

"My goal is to take the gospel where no man had taken it. I was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles in the same way that Peter was called to the Jews. I proclaim Christ, admonish and teach every man so that I can present every man complete. For this purpose, I strive according to His power, which mightily works within me."

(Rom 11:13) "But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,"

(Col 1:28-29) "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."

(1 Tim 2:7) "And for this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, called by God and by the will of God. He is writing a letter to the church in Corinth, which he planted, and where he trained leaders, and set them in as the pastors of the church.

(1 Cor 1:1) “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”

Conclusion and Applications

This morning I gave a quick overview of 1 Corinthians. It is a rich book with so many relevant topics. Then, we covered the first verse, where Paul identified himself as the author. Sosthenes was with Paul and most likely penned the letter for Paul. We took a brief look at Sosthenes, and then a more in-depth look at Paul’s life and his apostolic calling. To help understand Paul’s calling, I gave a quick overview of the two different types of apostles, and then the work that they do.

Next week, we will finish the Introduction. We will be looking at the recipients of the letter. More specifically, we will be looking at the identify of Christians.

Prayer

Father God, thank You for Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. It is so rich with principles and applications for our church and individual lives. I ask You to bless this series in 1 Corinthians. Holy Spirit, I ask You to lead me and lead us through the book. Give us applications for our lives. Father, help us to apply the things that You show us. Father, we saw the calling You had for Paul, and you did this before he was even born. You have a calling for each of us. I ask You to reveal the calling that you have for each of us. Help us to strive like Paul did to fulfill the work You have for us to do. I ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Q & A

- Do you know God’s calling in your life? If so, how did God reveal that calling to you?
- As a result of your calling, what have you done, or are you doing to fulfill it?
- How did God prepare Paul for the work that God called him to do?
- How has God been preparing you for the work He has for you to do?
- Paul may have had poor eyesight and was imprisoned, but his circumstances did not prevent him from carrying out the Lord’s work. How did Paul work around those obstacles?
- Do you have a Sosthenes in your life to help you with the things that you are limited in, or unable to do for yourself?
- Has this teaching on the two categories of apostles cleared up some things in your understanding about apostles?

Introduction (Eph 4:15–16, 1 Cor 1:1-3)

1. **Author(s) of the letter** (1 Cor 1:1, 1 Cor 16:21, 2 Thess 3:17, 1 Cor 5:9, 2 Cor 2:3–4)
 - a. **Sosthenes** (Acts 18:12–17, 18:8–11, 1 Cor 16:5-9)
 - b. **Paul**
 - i. **Paul’s personal life** (Acts 9:11, Phil 3:5-6, Acts 23:6, 1 Cor 7:7-8, 9:5, 2 Cor 10:10, 11:5-6, Gal 6:11, Acts 22:3, 5:34)
 - ii. **Paul’s apostolic calling** (1 Cor 1:1, Jer 1:4-5, Acts 9:15-16, Gal 1:15–16, Acts 13:1-4, 14:14, 1 Tim 2:7, 2 Tim 1:11, Matt 10:1-8, Acts 1:20-26, Rev 21:14, Eph 4:11-13, 1 Cor 12:28, Eph 2:19-20, Acts 13-14, 2 Cor 10:13-16, 1 Thess 1:1, 2:9-11, Acts 14:23, 15:37, 16:1-4, 1 Cor 4:14-17, 2 Tim 1:2, 2:1-2, Titus 1:4-5, 1 Thess 1:1, 1 Tim 1:3-11, Eph 4:11-13, Acts 2:42, Acts 15:1-35, Eph 4:13, Rom 1:11, Acts 15:36-41, 16:4-5, 1 Thess 3:2, 1 Cor 4:18-5:13, 2 Cor 13:10, 3 John 1:9-10, 1 Cor 9:2, Rom 11:13, Col 1:28-29, 1 Tim 2:7, Rom 11:13, Col 1:28-29, 1 Tim 2:7, Acts 13:1-4, Acts 14:14)

Conclusion and Applications