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EXEGESIS OF FIRST CORINTHIANS

Ronald Dunn

I Corinthians 1

Verse 1

(1) Paul called to be an apostle directly by Christ -  
Gal. 1:12-16. (Vincent)

(2) Called an apostle - not appointed by merit or  
human choice, but called thereto.

Through the will of God - through an express  
intervention of the Divine will.

The thought of the "call" of God as assigning to  
each Christian man his status is prominent in this  
epistle = v. 2 - "called to be saints"; v. 26 - "For  
ye see your calling.." (EGT)

(3) Through the will of God - These words point probably  
to the depreciation of Paul's apostolic authority at  
Corinth. (Alford)

(4) The beginning of I Cor. has the usual form of a  
Greek epistle. It mentions 1 - the name of the writer,  
2 - that of the addressee, 3 - a greeting. But Paul  
develops each part of the superscription, thus making it  
more extensive.

He is called by Christ Jesus, and therefore has  
authority and can demand obedience (cf 9:1 f., 15:8).  
Not all the Corinthians took the right attitude towards  
Paul, and therefore he reminds them in the beginning that  
his word comes to them as the word of Jesus Christ.

Through the will of God strengthens the authority of  
the apostle (Cf Gal. 1:1).

When Christ called Paul to the apostleship, He did  
so because it was God's will.

Through indicates that Christ not only acted according  
to the will of God, but that God explicitly expressed His  
desire to call. (NIC)

(5) An apostle - Paul stresses the divine origin of his  
apostleship. This is the thought in called (Romans 1:1),  
and in the insistence that it is through the will of God.  
The three expressions place impressive emphasis on the  
reality of the divine commission.

(Tyndale)

(6) Paul - His Jewish name was Saul. It was common  
for the Jews to bear one name among their own people and  
another among foreigners.

# I Corinthians 1

## Verse 1, continued

The word Apostle means literally a messenger, and then a missionary, or one sent to preach the Gospel. In its strict official sense it is applied only to the immediate messengers of Christ, the infallible teachers of His religion and founders of His church.  
(Hodge)

## Verse 2

ἐκκλησία  
from ἐκ

- lit. a calling out; an assembly  
, out of, and κλήεις a calling.

ἐπικαλουμένους

- Prest. Mid Part. of ἐπικαλέω  
I call upon, appeal to, address -  
also, I call (name) by a supplementary  
(additional, alternative) name.  
(Souter)

Denotes (a) to surname; (b) to be called by a person's name; hence it is used of being declared to be dedicated to a person, as to the Lord, Acts. 15:17; (c) To call upon, invoke; in the middle-voice, to call upon for oneself (i.e., on one's behalf), Acts. 7:59, or to call upon a person as a witness. (d) To call upon by way of adoration, making use of the Name of the Lord, Acts 2:21, Rom. 10:12, 13, 14  
(Vine)

ἡγιασμένους

- Perf. Pass. Part. of ἁγιάζω  
I make holy, I treat as holy,  
I sanctify, I hallow.

(1) Called to be Saints : "Saints by way of call." It is asserted that they are what they are called. The term ἅγιοι; Saints is applied to Christians in three senses in the N.T. 1 - as members of a visible and local community (Acts 9:32, 41; 26:10); 2 - as members of a spiritual community (I Cor. 1:2, Col. 3:12); 3 - as individually holy (Eph. 1:18, Col. 1:12).

Call upon the name -- The formula is from the Septuagint. See Zech. 13:9; Gen. 12:8; 13:4. It is used of worship, and here implies prayer to Christ. The first Christian prayer recorded as heard by Saul of Tarsus, was Stephen's prayer to Christ, Acts 7:59. The name of Christ occurs nine times in the first nine verses of this epistle.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 2, Continued

Theirs and Ours - Better to connect this with in every place. Every place in the province where Christians are is our place also.

The expression emphasizes the position of Paul as the founder and apostolic head of Christianity in Corinth and in all Achaia. (Vincent)

(2) τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ gives supreme dignity to the assembly of Corinthians addressed by the apostle of Christ Jesus - the assembled citizens of God's kingdom and commonwealth.

In Corinth - "that exists in Corinth." So far the Gospel has reached; in so foul a place it flourishes!

The local Christian gathering is part of one extended "congregation of God" existing in this place or that.

"The church of God consisting of men sanctified in Christ Jesus:" Church status is grounded on personal relationship to God in Christ. Now this relationship began with God's call which summoned each to a holy life within the Christian fellowship.

Sanctified : The perf. poss. part. expresses a determinate state: once for all the Corinthians have been devoted to God, by His call and their consent. It imports union with Christ (6:17, 19; 12:11), as well as salvation through Christ.

His past work is the objective ground, His present Heavenly being (implied by the name "Christ Jesus", as in this order) the active spring of this "living to God."

The repeated referend to the holiness of the readers recalls them to their vocation; low practice calls for the reassertion of high ideals.

In every place - The readers belong to a widespread as well as holy community.

To "call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" - to invoke Him in prayer as "Lord" - is the mark of the Christian, by which Saul, once recognized his victims, the index of saving faith (12:3; Rom. 10:12 fg.)

Theirs and Ours heightens the sense of wide fellowship given by the previous clause. One Lord unites all hearts in the obedience of faith. (EGT)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 2, continued

(You can almost tell what problems Paul is going to deal with in the epistle by the things he stresses in the salutation. Here he lays the doctrinal foundation for his arguments.)

(3) Church of God refers to through the will of God (v. 1) The church has her origin but also her life in the work of God in this world and therefore Paul has the right and the obligation as an apostle of Christ Jesus to write to the Corinthians.

The Greek word for church is not used exclusively with reference to the Christian church in the N.T. (Cf Acts 19:39). The addition of God is consequently not entirely superfluous. This church is characterized by her relation to God. Since the words of God stress the unity of the church they may also involve a condemnation of the factions in the church at Corinth.

Sanctified - God has sanctified them. He has liberated them from the unclean world and has put them in a relationship to Himself whereby they might have fellowship with Him. This sanctification by God is possible only through the work of Christ Jesus in whom we are sanctified. The Corinthians are not born saints but they are sanctified by virtue of an act of God in Jesus, the consequences of which last till the present.

(Note the parallels: Paul called an apostle - the Corinthians called saints; an apostle through the will of God to the church of God - the same one who called them to be saints called him to be their instructor!) RLD

Called Saints - They were called to this sanctity by the preaching of the Gospel (Heb. 1:3) so that they know they are sanctified. Paul the apostle and the Corinthians are what they are by the vocation (calling) of God. They heard the call and accepted it. But that vocation comes to them even now, yes again and again, so that they remain called. *κλητός* is an adjective and indicates a permanent condition.

The perfect participle *ἡγιασμένοι* indicates a condition which has been called into being and which consequently exists. Such a condition can only exist by the grace of God in Christ. (Col. 1:13).

Verse 2, continued

It is a remarkable fact that Paul asserts the sanctify of the church with such vigor in an epistle in which he unceasingly reproves the readers because of their sins. They are saints in Christ, in spite of all their sins. The Corinthians are saints, but they live in sin. God does not abandon them but calls them to walk according to their imputed holiness. There is an imputed and an acquitted holiness.

(Paul is calling them to be what they are. It is not trying to become something you aren't - but becoming something you already are!) RLD

With all That Call Upon - connect these words with "called to be saints". Not only the Corinthians but all who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., who confess that He is Lord (12:3; Phil. 2:11), and call upon Him, also confessing that He is God (Acts 2:21; 7:59, 9:19, Rom. 10:12) and who by so doing declare themselves to be Christians, are called to be saints.

The Corinthians needed to be reminded of these things for they did not take account of others (12:12 f; 14:36). There is a oneness of all who believe. This oneness may be lost sight of in our quarrels and so we need to be reminded of it.

Ours and Theirs - The ARV reads, "in every place, their Lord and ours," the word Lord being an insertion. As the Greek has the pronouns after place it seems better to combine them with that word.

Paul stresses the unity of the church. Whatever the place may be where her members live, together they form the one body of Christ. (NIC)

(4) The Church of God - remind them that they were a congregation belonging to God and not to any head of a party.

The church consisted not in being planted or presided over by Paul, Apollos or Cephas but in calling on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Not "calling themselves by that name," but calling on the name. (Alford)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 2, continued

(5) ἐκκλησία is a word which in ordinary Greek could apply to any secular assembly (it is used of the rioting Ephesians in Acts 19:32, 41; cf v. 39). The Christians bypassed the regular Greek words used for religious brotherhoods, and made this their characteristic name for the believers. It points to the fact that the church is not merely one religious group among many. It is unique. Ordinary words will no do. But it is not any "assembly": it is the ekklesia of God.

Here the church is further defined as them that are sanctified and as called to be saints. Both expressions bring out the thought that Christians are set apart for the service of Christ.

The calling upon the name of Christ is an unusual way of describing Christians. Its importance is that in the O.T. it is the name of Jehovah upon which men call (see especially Joel 2:32). The highest place is being assigned to Christ. (Tyndale)

(6) Church of God - called out from the world. To them that are sanctified ... This is explanatory of the preceding clauses, and teaches us the nature of the church. It consists of the sanctified. The word means to cleanse or to render sacred by consecrating any person or thing to God. The church consists of those whose guilt is expiated, who are inwardly holy, and who are consecrated to God as his peculiar people.

In Christ Jesus, in virtue of union with him. It is only in him that we are partakers of these inestimable blessings.

Called to be Saints - By the effectual call of the Holy Spirit constituted saints. "The called: always mean the effectually called as distinguished from the merely externally invited.

Call upon the name - to call upon the name of anyone is to invoke his aid. To call upon the name of Jesus as Lord is to worship him. It is to look to him for that help which only God can give. All Christians, therefore, are the worshippers of Christ. The phrase expresses not so much an individual act of invocation, as an habitual state of mind and its appropriate expression. (Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 2, continued

(7) The recipients are first, designated collectively as a body and other described as to their Christian character and their associates.

Church purpose: designates an assembly that gathers in answer to a call issued for that purpose.

The perfect participle sanctified tells of a past act and its present and continuing result. The Corinthians, once made holy by the grace of God in Christ, by faith continue in this holiness.

Saints: The idea expressed in this word is separation from everything profane and worldly and devotion to God in Christ Jesus. Paul calls the Corinthians sanctified in spite of the fact that he has much fault to find with them. It is not strange that Paul uses sanctified combined with saints, for the entire burden of the epistle is instruction and admonition to be more fully just what these two terms convey.

(Lanski)



I Corinthians 1

Verse 3

(1) Grace is the Greek salutation, peace the Jewish. Both in the spiritual sense.  
(Vincent)

(2) The Greek word for grace is a cognate of the word for greeting. The Christian salutation thus adds depth to the usual Greek greeting. Paul does not just greet the Corinthians but he wishes them grace from God, i.e., the grace in Jesus Christ.

This grace manifests itself in peace, which is its mature fruit, a peace of soul, a genuine peace since it descends from God. God grants grace and peace because He is a Father to them that call upon Him in Christ. (NIC)

(3) Peace is not simply the absence of strife, but the presence of positive blessings. It is the prosperity of the whole man, especially his spiritual prosperity. (Tyndale)

(4) Grace is favor, and peace its fruits. The former includes all that is comprehended in the love of God as exercised toward sinners; and the latter all the benefits which flow from that love. All good, therefore, whether providential or spiritual, whether temporal or eternal, is comprehended in these terms. These infinite blessings flow from an infinite source.  
(Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 4

δοθεῖσθαι - Aor poss. Part.

(1) Given you in Christ Jesus - in fellowship with. The element or sphere in which the grace is manifested. Simply because we're saved.  
(Vincent)

(29) The Thanksgiving 1:4-9. Paul thanks God

1 - for the past grace given to the Corinthians v. 4;

2 - for the rich intellectual development of that grace vv 5-7;

3 - for the certainty that they will be perfected in grace.

ἐπὶ , of the occasioning cause - "the grace that was given you, " at conversion.  
(EGT)

(3) The apostle does not thank men in order to win their good will. He does this only in so far as he, before he begins to exhort, mentions the things which through the grace of God are worthy of praise in the church. Thus salutations and thanksgivings point forward to the contents of the epistle.

I thank my God, at the beginning of a sentence indicates that all blessings that can be enumerated are the gifts of God and only of Him. Paul emphasizes that everything the Corinthians possess is grace. Note the use of the following words: χάρις , v 3; εὐχαριστῶ, χάριτι v. 4; χάρισμα v. 7

God gives them enriching grace - Their gifts were the grace of God manifested in and through them - no credit or praise to them - to think of yourself as specially spiritual or having the edge on another because of gifts is ignorant pride, for it is all of grace.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 4, continued

The cause of this thanksgiving is the grace  
of God given to the Corinthians. Grace in this  
 verse is therefore not a virtue of God but the  
 manifestation thereof. <sup>Xapis</sup> here in  
 has the same sense as <sup>Xapisna</sup> (NIC)  
 verse 7.

(4) It is Paul's habit to encourage and praise  
 his converts where he can.

Merely human achievement means little to  
 Paul. His thanks are not for anything that the  
 Corinthians have done by their own efforts, but  
 for what the grace of God given in Christ Jesus  
 had accomplished in them. (Tyndale)

Verse 5<sup>2</sup>ἐπλουτίσθητε

- Aor. pass of πλουτίζω
- I enrich, to make rich

(1) The two words - utterance and knowledge are found together, 12:8; 2 Cor. 11:6; 8:7.

Utterance, aptitude in speech. Paul gives thanks for speech as a means of testifying for Christ.

"The saints have never been silent." (Pascal)  
(Vincent)

(2) This stands in explicative opposition to the foregoing. The affluence of endowment conferred on the Corinthians stirred the apostle's gratitude.

The exuberance of grace in the Corinthians shone "in all manner of utterance and all manner of knowledge."

Relatively to γνῶσις, λόγος is the ability and readiness to say what one understands; γνῶσις, the power and ability to understand.  
(EGT)

(3) That has explicative force, i.e., vs. 5 explains the grace God bestowed on the church at Corinth. Paul does not describe these benefits in an incoherent series, but he places them in their proper relations to each other.

This grace means that the Corinthians are in every respect enriched in Him.

Every and enriched speak of the quantity, the second part of the verse mentions the quality of this grace. Every is not meant absolutely, as if the sense were "in all possible respects," for the following words in all utterance and all knowledge have restrictive force. The meaning of every must be: all that is here under discussion; all that you possess. In all that you possess you are enriched, i.e., you have received much.

Paul indicates that the characteristic feature of the church at Corinth is wealth.

Verse 5, continued

There is nothing small about the congregation at Corinth, but this same grandeur gave also rise to many sins (cf. 4:7). And it is Paul's purpose to preach to the Corinthians that all their wealth has its root in Jesus Christ, in grace (II Cor. 8:9).

The second half of the verse describes the character of this wealth.

Utterance - Corinth is a Greek city and Greece is the country of eloquence. Utterance is the translation of a Greek word which signifies the word not as it is spoken but as regards its contents. The Corinthians had something to speak about and they could speak it.

Knowledge - They did not speak about things not worthwhile. They had real knowledge.

Knowledge as it is used here may be the fruit of intuition, even of a mystic feeling. At least it is not exclusively the result of research or thinking, but it is an insight into things.

Both words, utterance and knowledge, preceded by all indicate that Corinth knew of an extensive, elevated discussion on the basis of their insight into spiritual things. (II Cor. 8:7). Their richness in Christ consists especially in the ability to speak well about the revelation of God. This is a Christian virtue but the danger is that it degenerates into a boasting of their own theological knowledge.

(NIC)

(4) λόγος - the truth preached  
 γινώσκεις - the truth apprehended.

They were rich in the preaching of the word, had among them able preachers, and rich in the apprehension of the word, were themselves intelligent hearers.

(Alford)

(5) The idea of greatness is enhanced by the phrase "in everything". God had withheld nothing from them. And all that he had given them was in connection with Christ. For the third time we meet this significant phrase in these first lines.

I Corinthians 1

Verse 5, continued

λογος includes the thought as well as its expression by means of the sounds of language. The phrase must refer to any and every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ.

The "knowledge" here added to utterance is the result of the latter. Where all forms of teaching and of admonition abound, there, as a natural result, all the forms of knowledge will spread in the congregation and thus likewise abound. (Lenski)

(6) Merely human achievement means little to Paul. His thanks are not for anything that the Corinthians have done by their own efforts, but for what the grace of God given in Christ, had accomplished for them.

Two points are singled out, utterance, the telling forth of the truth, and knowledge, the grasp of the truth. He selects the gifts of which the Corinthians were especially proud. (Tyndale)

(7) This verse is explanatory of the preceding. Paul gives thanks for the grace which they had received, i.e. that in everything they were enriched. In every respect they were richly endowed with the gifts of the Spirit.

All knowledge - every kind and degree of religious knowledge .

The word utterance may be taken in the sense of doctrine, and the word knowledge, in the sense of insight. The meaning would then be, that the church in Corinth was richly endowed with divine truth, and with clear apprehension or understanding of the doctrines which they had been taught. They were second to no other church either as to doctrinal knowledge or spiritual discernment.

(Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

## Verse 6

ἐβεβαιώθη

- Aor ind pass of *βεβαιόω*  
 I confirm, ratify.  
To make firm, establish, make secure.

(1) Testimony concerning Christ. (Vincent)

(2) τοῦ Χριστοῦ is objective genitive to  
 - "the witness to Christ." - coming  
 from both God and men.  
 μαρτύριον indicates the well-established truth  
 of the message.

The witness about Christ was made sure among you;  
 its reality was verified. By outward demonstration -  
 miracles, etc.; or by the inner persuasion of a firm faith.  
 (EGT)

(3) Even as has comparative force: was confirmed is put  
 on the same plane with were enriched. Both verbs have a  
 quantitative character.

The testimony of Christ has received a firm place in,  
 or among, the Corinthians.

The testimony of Christ is the testimony that deals with  
 Christ (II Tim. 1:8). The book of Acts shows that the  
 testimony of Christ is the objective testifying to the  
 words and deeds of Christ, which the apostles had seen and  
 heard with their own eyes and ears. It is the preaching of  
 the Gospel at Corinth by Paul, which preaching had been  
 accepted by the Corinthians. Consequently they had been  
 enriched in utterance and knowledge.

The testimony of Christ furnished them with the things  
 of which they had to speak and which they had to know. The  
 preaching is the source. (NIC)

(4) Was confirmed - took deep root among you - "as was  
 to have been expected, from the impression made among you  
 by my preaching of Christ."

This confirmation was internal, by faith and  
 permanence in the truth, not external, by miracles.  
 (Alford)

## I Corinthians 1

## Verse 7

ὥστε ἵνα ὀπίσθω

- Pres. mid or Pass. Inf. of ὥστε ἵνα  
 - I come late, I am left behind;  
I fall short, I am inferior,  
I suffer want.

ἀπεκδεχόμενοι

- Pres. Part. of  
 (rare) I expect eagerly,  
I wait for eagerly.

(1) Come behind - contrast with were enriched. Gift - Its prevailing sense in this epistle is that of special spiritual endowments. Here of spiritual blessings generally.

Waiting - Denoting assiduous waiting. Thayer compares the phrase wait it out. (Vincent)

(2) Verse 7 describes the result of the firm establishment of the gospel.

The middle voice - come behind - implies subjective reflexion, the consciousness of inferiority. (They felt, were aware, of their richness.)

The strong assurance with which the Corinthians embraced the Gospel was followed by a shower of spiritual energies, of which they had a lively sense.

Gift - a χάρισμα is χάρις in some concrete result - a specific endowment of God's grace.

The church excelled the Corinthians in the variety of its endowments and the satisfaction felt in them.

Awaiting - The pres. part. implies a continuous state conditioning that of the foregoing clause: the unstinted plenty of Divine gifts continued while the recipients fixed their thought upon the Day of Christ.

The Corinthians were richly blessed with present good, while expecting a good far exceeding it: a tacit warning against fancied satisfaction in the present.

(EGT)



## I Corinthians 1

Verse 7, continued

(3) Vs. 7 gives a conclusion with so that; this conclusion goes with v. 5 as well as v. 6 since gift is a general word. Gift indicates the respect in which there is no lack.

Waiting for expresses an attendant circumstance. After having heard what the Corinthians are and what they possess, we are now informed as to what they do and what their attitude is.

This waiting means action on the part of the Corinthians. Their eye looks forward to the end, their life is eschatological. (NIC)

(4) Χάρισμα here has its widest sense, of that which is the effect of Χαρις - not meaning "spiritual gifts" in the narrower sense, as in 12:4. This is plain from the whole strain of the passage, which dwells not on outward gifts, but on the inward graces of the Christian life.

Waiting. - The greatest proof of maturity and richness of the spiritual life. (Alford)

(5) This clause - you come behind ... points out the result of all this past activity of God's as it is found in the present condition of the Corinthians.

How does Paul determine when a congregation does not come short? The added participial clause contains the answer: waiting...

A congregation does not fall short when it is waiting for the Lord's revelation. (Lenski)

(6) Gift: This word is used 1 - of salvation (Rom. 5:15), 2 - of God's good gifts in general (Rom. 11:29), and 3 - of special equipments of the Spirit. Here the thought is the wide one - 2. God has enriched their lives and they lack no spiritual gift.

The reference to the Lord's return is unexpected. The connection of thought may be that the present foretaste of the Spirit turns our thoughts to the fuller experience of the last day. (Tyndale)

I Corinthians 1

Verse 7, continued

(7) The first prints of the Spirit enjoyed by believers in this life are an earnest, a foretaste - pledge of those blessings which they are to receive in their fulness at the second advent.

The Corinthians had received largely the gifts of the Spirit: the consequence was they waited with patience and desire for the revelation of Christ, when they should enter on that inheritance of which those gifts are the foretaste and pledge. (Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 8

ἀνεγκλήτους - irreproachable (especially in private), blameless. Signifies that which cannot be called to account, with nothing laid to one's charge (as the result of public investigation). It implies not merely acquittal, but the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person.  
(Vine)

(1) Unto the End - of the present aeon or period.

Blameless - The word points to appearance at God's bar.  
(Vincent)

(2) The Savior who will make sure the innocence of the Corinthians on that day is the Judge who will pronounce upon it: He will then confirm them and vindicate their character, as they have confirmed the testimony about Him.

The same one who judges us is the same one who defends us! (RLD)

Paul does not say the Corinthians are blameless now.  
(EGT)

(3) Verse 4 has explained what God has done, but God will do more: He will take care of the future also.

Again, we meet the verb to confirm. The first time it was used of doctrine, now it is used of life. As to doctrine, everything was right at Corinth, generally speaking. But their life was far from being right. And before Paul comes to admonitions, he places all things in the hands of God. God will confirm and sustain till the end, and since that is so, their life also will be a good life.

I Corinthians 1

Verse 8, continued

The work of God continues to the end. This can be taken of time as well as of degree.

The result of this confirmation by God will be that the Corinthians will be unreprouvable in the last day. There will be no accusations against them.

Their waiting can be filled with hope. The rest of the epistle shows that Paul, by putting these things first, does not in the least mean to cultivate a spirit of carelessness. (NIC)

(4) Christ, who has enriched them, given them grace and every good gift, will see to it that right through until the last time nothing is lacking to them.

(Tyndal)

(5) Confirm - shall make steadfast, preserve from falling. (Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 9

ἐκλήθητε

- Aor pass of καλέω -  
I call, summon, invite.

(1) Faithful - Emphatic and therefore first in the sentence. (Vincent)

(2) The ground of Paul's hope for the ultimate welfare of the Corinthians is God's fidelity. His gifts are bestowed on a wise and settled plan; His Word, with it His character, is pledged to the salvation of those who believe in His Son.

Called - God had manifestly interposed to bring the Corinthians into the communion of Christ. His voice sounded in the ears of the Corinthians when the Gospel summons reached them. Christ and God are both therefore security for the perfecting of their Christian life.

Called into a communion belonging to (and named after) God's Son, of which He is the Founder, center and sum. Its content is sonship to God, since it is a communion of His Son, and consequent heirship to God.

The title "our Lord," added to "His Son Jesus Christ," invests the Christian communism with present grandeur and certifies its hope of glory.

Verse 9 sustains and crowns the hope expressed in verse 8.

(EGT)

(3) Verse 9 contains the reason for that which immediately precedes. The question why God will confirm is answered by the statement that He is faithful, i.e., He continues His work. The apostle seeks in God the certainty of what he has just said. For it was He who called and therefore He will also continue.

The use of through instead of "by" is very remarkable. Through is used of the principal cause and is likely to express the through that the calling of God took place indirectly, i.e., God did not speak from heaven to every Corinthian personally, but He called through the preaching of the Gospel.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 9, continued

The Corinthians are called to something very specific, for their calling has brought them into relation with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Note the use of so many names at once. It reveals the glory of the Son and in Him also of the Corinthians who are joined to Him. And this is very important. For how could they walk unholily who stand in a firm relation to the holy Son of God?

The word fellowship therefore, is the clue to the understanding of unreprieveable in v. 8. How is it possible that the Corinthians will be unreprieveable in the day of Christ? Because they stand in relation to Him and share in the fruits of His work.

These opening verses (4-9) form the basis for subsequent admonitions. Christians can only be admonished successfully after God has made them true Christians. But he who was made a Christian must walk according to his vocation. (NIC)

(4) This (verse 8) is not a vain boast. It is a sure confidence grounded on the fact that God is faithful. The continuance of the favors mentioned in the preceding verses may be confidently looked for. The character of God is at stake.

Called - It is because God has called him and not because of his own initiative that he has become a Christian.

(5) The apostle's confidence in the steadfastness and final perseverance of believers was founded not on their strength to persevere, but simply on the fidelity of God.

The only evidence of election is vocation, and the only evidence of vocation is holiness of heart and life; for we are called into the fellowship of His Son.

Fellowship includes union and communion.

We are called to be partakers of Christ, partakers of His life; of his character, suffering here and of his glory hereafter.

It is because believers are thus partakers of Christ, that the apostle was assured they could never perish. (Hodge)

I Corinthians 1

Verse 9, continued

Conclusion: It is worth noticing the way Paul dwells lovingly on the name of his Savior. Nine times in these nine verses he makes use of this name. Christ is absolutely central. Paul lingers over the name.

(Tyndal)

I Corinthians 1:10 ff

γνώμη

- opinion, counsel

νοῦς

- the mind, the reason, the reasoning faculty.

Verse 10

λέγῃτε

← pres act subj of λέγω  
- I say

σχίσματα: nom. acc. plural of σχίσμα - a cleavage, cleft, split, rent, a division in a crowd due to a difference of opinion, a party division.

κατηρτισμένοι

- perf. poss. Part of καταρτίζω,  
I join, fit together, I compact together; I bring into its proper condition (whether for the first time or after a lapse).

(1) Divisions In classical Greek used only of actual rents in material.

Perfectly joined together - carrying on the metaphor in divisions. Not of individual and absolute perfection, but of perfection in the unity of the church.

Judgment - The distinction between mind and judgment is between understand and opinion; νοῦς regarding the thing from the side of the subject, γνώμη from the side of the object. Being in the same realm of thought, they would judge questions from the same Christian standpoint, and formulate their judgment accordingly.  
(Vincent)

(2) Paul could not honestly give thanks for the actual condition of the Corinthian church. The reason for this omission at once appears. The church is rent with factions, which ranged themselves under the names of leading Christian teachers.

Out of their crude and childish experience (3:1-4) the Corinthians are constructing prematurely a γνώσις of their own (8:1), a σοφία resembling that "wisdom of the world" which is "foolishness with God". They think themselves above the mere λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ brought by Paul, wherein, simple as it appeared, there lay the



Cause of the Divisions: wrong concept of  
1. The message  
2. The minister  
(25) 3. The ministry

## I Corinthians 1

### Verse 10, continued

wisdom and the power of God. This conceit had been stimulated, unwittingly on his part, by the preaching of Apollos. Ch. 3:3-7 shows that it is the Apollonian faction which most exercises Paul's thoughts at present.

The irony of 1:18-31 and 4:6-13 is aimed at the partisans of Apollos, who exalted his ὑπεροχή (superiority). λόγου κ. σοφίας in disparagement of Paul's unadorned κήρυγμα τοῦ σταύρου. Mistaking the nature of the Gospel, the Corinthians mistook the office of its ministers. Paul corrects their misconception of the Gospel in 1:18-2:5 showing in what sense and why the Gospel is not, and in 2:6-3:2 showing in what sense and to whom the Gospel is a σοφία.

The other misconception is rectified in 3:3-4:21, where, with express reference to Apollos and Paul, Christian teachers are shown to be no competing leaders of human schools but "fellow-workmen of God" and "servants of Christ," cooperative and complementary instruments of His sovereign work in building the church. The four chapters (1-4) constitute an apologia for the Apostle's teaching and office.

Verses 10-17: Paul warns the Corinthians solemnly against their schisms (10) stating the testimony on which his admonition is based (11.) The four parties are defined out of the mouths of the Corinthians (12); and the Apostle protests especially against the use of Christ's name and his own in this connection (13). In founding the church he had avoided all self-exaltation, bent only on fulfilling his mission of preaching the good news. (14-17).

"But I exhort ..." The reproof to be given stands in painful contrast (δέ) with the Thanksgiving. It is administered "through the Name of Christ"; all the authority and grace of the Name reinforce his appeal.

"All say the same thing" - instead of  
"saying, each of you, I am of Paul, etc." K

τὸ αὐτὸ λέγειν, a strictly classical expression used of political communities which are free from factions, or of different states which entertain friendly relations with each other." This is a matter of attitude and declaration and is opposed to party zeal.  
(EGT)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 10, continued

Additional from EGT

The schism is a rent in the church, an injury to the fabric. Paul desire this be repaired to enable the church to act as one body and to pursue Christ's work with undivided strength. (EGT)

(3) The sin and folly of such divisions are manifest, in the first place, because Christ is incapable of division. As there is one head, there can be but one body. As there is but one Christ, there can be but one church.

And in the second place, because religious leaders are not centers of unity in the church. They had not redeemed it, nor did its members profess allegiance to them in baptism.

These divisions, therefore, arose on the one hand, from a forgetfulness of the common relation which all Christians bear to Christ; and, on the other, from a misapprehension of the relation in which believers stand to their religious teachers.

There is but one exhortation in this verse (10), which is expressed first in general terms, "that ye all say the same thing;" and is then explained in the negative form, "that there be no divisions among you"; and then positively, "that ye be perfectly joined together."

By The Name ... out of regard to Christ. Their reverence and love of Christ, and regard for his authority as their Lord, should induce them to yield obedience to Paul's exhortation. It was not out of respect to him, but out of regard to Christ they should obey. This renders obedience easy and elevating.

Say the same thing - This is a phrase of frequent occurrence to express agreement.

Divisions - a difference of opinion; alienation of feeling, or inward separation.

This union was to be both in mind and in judgment. The former term may refer either to the intellect or feelings. The latter in the N.T. always means judgment or opinion.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 10, continued

Considering the relation in which Christians stand to each other as the members of Christ, dissensions among them are as inconsistent with their character, as conflict between members of the human body.

(Hodge)

(4) Divisions - These had not developed yet, but if the quarrelling and party-spirit described in the following sentences were allowed to develop unchecked, outright division might be the result. As yet they formed one united church, in spite of these internal tensions.

(Bruce)

(5) In his other letters Paul first offers doctrine and secondly admonition. In this letter he at once writes: "I admonish you." The "confirmation" promised in v. 8 is thus to be realized at once. While this letter is thus to be build up of admonition, this admonition is often combined with doctrinal statements and explanations of the greatest value.

Paul uses the common transitional *δε* now, and also the loving address brethren with its friendly appeal to the heart. There were many troubles and faults among the Corinthians, and yet these do not sever the fraternal tie that binds them to Paul.

Paul mediates *(δία)* his summons through the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all that Paul intends to write in his admonition he will use Christ's name or revelation to enlighten and to move. There is no saving or cleansing power apart from this Name.

*(να)* introduces the substance of the admonition. That you all speak the same thing. The subject as well as the object of this verb are emphatic by their position. In a broad way Paul states in this brief summary the theme of the entire first part of his letter. They are all to be a unit in what they think and say as Christians, for *λέγω* always involves the thought that is put into words and never indicates merely the sounds of the lips or the form of expression.

That there be no, not, "that there no longer be," leaving unsaid whether the factions are already actual or only impending.

Perfected - He uses the perfect participle as a predicate after *ἦτε* : "that you may be (or may go on being) such as have been perfectly fitted out." (from *ῥητορ*). Paul thus omits the implication that

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 10, continued

the Corinthians are actually divided at this time.

The Corinthians are to be Christians who have been perfected, adjusted, and well furnished "in the same mind and in the same judgment" The two phrases elucidate Paul's statement in which he calls on the Corinthians to speak the same thing. When they are properly equipped they will not differ among themselves in regard to spiritual understanding or in regard to spiritual judgment. Back of one speaking is the mind or the understanding by which we grasp a subject; and, having grasped it, we form our judgment and our conclusions; and these we put into speech.

Paul desires the same mind and the same judgment be found in all the Corinthians and not divergent or contradictory conclusions. Yet mere harmony and agreement is not Paul's ideal but a unity of right understanding and judgment.

The apostle is not thinking in a special way about doctrinal unity as he does in Eph. 4:3, etc. although this is included. He has in mind the various questions that have arisen in Corinth and the contradictory answers the Corinthians have given to these questions. The situations that have developed were not properly understood by some, and hence their judgements, too, had been warped. As a result some spoke in favor of a thing, others against it; or there was even a variety of opinions.

Paul would not have us believe that differences of this kind are immaterial as long as no doctrine is directly involved. If they are allowed to continue, the result must eventually be factions and rents in the congregation, which are not only disturbing but also destructive in their effect.

(Lenski)

(Paul is not asking merely that everyone agree because that's the thing to do, whether they really agree or not. He is not asking for a vote to make it unanimous regardless of how all feel. But that we have a grasp and understanding of truth and thus form the right opinion. The divisions come from an inadequate grasp of truth which must always result in a wrong opinion.

- came up with a cure for which there is no known disease. -

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 10, continued

If they understand accurately the issue and question, the truth, they will all come to the same conclusion or judgment. The result will be they will all say the same thing. Truth never contradicts itself. Where there is difference of opinion, someone doesn't have a good understanding.

The problem arose because some failed to "understand" the nature of the Gospel, the cross and the preachers' ministry. In the following chapters he will seek to correct their understanding.

\*

Even though vv 8 and 9 guarantee the confirmation and blamelessness of the Corinthians they are not to be complacent about the faults in their fellowship. They must be corrected.)

( The confirmation of v.8 is the basis for this admonition - Christ is going to be confirming them right up to the end and part of the present confirmation is this admonition - Christ is confirming them through Paul's letter -)

(6) The Greek word Beseech has a consoling and a warning sense. In v. 10 the warning sense is most prominent as the context shows.

Name implies naming. The name of Jesus Christ is uttered and in that way, not merely through Christ, but through the utterance of His name the apostle exhorts.

By uttering the name of the Lord Jesus Paul recalls to the mind of the Corinthians the suffering and the glory of the Mediator and the fruit therefor for the children of God (Cf "fellowship" v.9).

He admonishes them to place themselves before the face of the Lord.

If all the Corinthians speak the same thing they will be unanimous and think the same.

That there be is a cautious expression. The apostle uses caution throughout this whole passage. This is not for lack of information but partly because he wishes to deal prudently with the Corinthians, partly also because he is reproving the division itself rather than its cause.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 10, continued

Difference of opinion can easily lead to sin and division.

Mind is the intellect in its judging faculty.

Judgment stands for the expressed opinion, the conviction.

The Corinthians must be perfected together through their opinion and its expression. Note the perfect tense. Paul does not only urge that the evil be corrected but he implies that the improved condition must continue. The latter will be the case if the Corinthians by the continued action of their mind will always judge in the same manner and if, as a consequence, their conviction concerning specific things expresses itself concretely in the same manner.

Verse 10 pronounces a very decisive verdict. However, Paul does not want to banish all diversity from the church, as is clear from the following verses where such diversity is not opposed (3:6ff), but only an unbrotherly attitude.  
(NIC)

(7) Now *δε* is adversative. It sets what follows over against the preceding as a contrast to it. So far from "fellowship" being realized, there is division.

By The Name. This one name stands over against all party names.

The divisions were internal.

Perfectly joined together. This is the rendering of a Greek verb which has to do with restoring anything to its proper condition - used of mending nets in Matt. 4:21. The condition of the Corinthians was far from what it should have been. Restorative action was demanded.

(Tyndal)

I Corinthians 1

The Problem - divisions among you (v. 10)

The Cause, immediate - v. 11 - quarrels, disputings

The Ultimate Cause,

Cause of the Quarrels - v. 12 ff

A Misunderstanding of the Gospel  
and of the Gospel preachers ministry

The Message of the Gospel and

The Ministry of the Gospel and

The Ministers of the Gospel

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 11,

εδηλώθη

- Aor Poss Ind of
- show, make clear, reveal, make plain.

ἐριδες

- strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, contention, wrangling

(1) Declared - Make clear. It may imply that Paul was reluctant to believe the reports, but was convinced by unimpeachable testimony.

Contentions - Socrates distinguishes between disputing and discussing. (Vincent)

(2) The appeal above made implies a serious charge; now the authority for it. εδηλώθη implies definite information, the disclosure of facts.

These ἐριδες, the next verse explains were generating the σχίσματα (EGT)

(3) Strife, Wranglings, explains the nature of the schisms referred to in v. 10. These strifes, as appears from what follows, were about their religious leaders. (Hodge)

(4) Declared is placed forward for emphasis, Paul names the source of his information. He is not entertaining idle rumors. Nor is Paul secretive. The Corinthians need not ask: "Who told him?" Paul is quite open.

\* The subtlety or deceitfulness of divisions -

They were not aware of the problem -  
Before Paul answers their question, he mentions this and deals with it for he recognizes that these divisions are the source of their troubled questions - they had failed to recognize the main problem - Before any other problems can be solved the problem of division must be.



## I Corinthians 1

Verse 11, continued

The Corinthians themselves had sent a letter to Paul, which he had just received, in which they asked him about a number of things that troubled them, but they had said nothing in their letter about the contentions that Chloe's people reported to him. We do not know why they said nothing on the subject. We note only that Paul does not reprove them for this omission. Perhaps they did not realize the danger that threatened them through these bickerings.

We may ask whether it was ethically proper for those of Chloe to tell Paul what they knew about the conditions existing in Corinth. The question answers itself, for Paul accepted and acted on the information he thus received. Observe, too, that \_\_\_\_\_ is plural. A number of witnesses attested the facts to the Apostle.  
(Lenski)

(5) He mentions explicitly the source of his information so that the Corinthians cannot contest its correctness.

The words it has been signified unto me ... suppose that Paul at first did not believe conditions were so bad at Corinth, but that, upon questioning the slaves of Chloe, he could only conclude that there were contentions in the church.  
(Paul did not act impulsively, jump at conclusions, or go off half-cocked - He patiently and accurately verified and substantiated the facts before he wrote.)

Contentions are not the same as divisions, schisms (v. 10). The term shows that there was sin at Corinth, that the difference led to quarrels, because everyone held his own opinion as the only right one and detested the views of others.

Among you passes a judgment on the quarreling brethren, but implies nevertheless that the church had not yet broken up since it met at the same place.  
(NIC)

(6) The word declared means "made clear." Paul was not left in any doubt.

Contentions points us to quarrels. There are a spirit of factiousness. Feelings were aroused. In Gal. 5:20 this is catalogued as one of the works of the flesh (translated there "variance"). (Tyndale)

## I Corinthians 1

## Verse 12

(1) Now This I Say - A familiar classical formula:  
 "what I mean is this."

I am of Paul and I of Apollos - The repeated and, expresses the opposition between the respective parties. The followers of Apollos preferred his more philosophical and rhetorical preaching to the simpler and more direct utterances of Paul. Others ranged themselves under Peter. (It would seem that the differences did not arise over the content, or message, of the various preachers, but rather over their style or personality, etc. If Apollos were failing to faithfully teach the Word, it would be right for some to say, "I am of Paul.")

Cephas - Peter would be the rallying-point for the Judiazing Christians, who claimed him as the apostle of the circumcision. The state of the Corinthian church offered the most favorable ground for Paul's Jewish-Christian adversaries, who took advantage of the reaction created by the looser views and practice of Gentile Christians, and by the differences of opinion on important questions, to press the necessity of legal regulation, and of ceremonial observances in non-essentials. (Vincent)

(2) "Each of you is saying" - instead of you are all saying the same thing. (v. 10)

- distributive, as in 14:26: each is saying one or other of these things; the party cries are quoted as from successive speakers challenging each other.

## The Four Parties

1 - The body of the church, converted under Paul's ministry adhered to its own apostle; Paul valued this loyalty and appeals to it, while he condemns its combative expression - the disposition of men "more Pauline than Paul himself" to exalt him to the disparagement of other leaders, and even to the detriment of Christ's glory.

2 - Apollos had preached at Corinth, in the interval since Paul's first departure, with brilliant effect. He possessed Alexandrian culture and a graceful style, whereas Paul was deemed at Corinth "unskilled in speech" (2 Cor. 11:6). He had made some personal converts; others welcomed his teaching as more advanced than Paul's plain Gospel message.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 12, continued

Judging from this epistle, the Pauline and Apollonian sections included at present the bulk of the church, divided between its "planter" and "waterer".

3 - Peter - Cephas - Conservative Jewish believers, which conflict was afoot, rallied to the name of the preacher of Pentecost and the hero of the church's earliest victories. The use of Cephas, the Aramaic original of Peter, indicates that this party affected Palestinian traditions.

4 - I am of Christ: I Cor. 3:22 is Paul's decisive correction of the rivalries of 1:12. The human leaders pitted against each other all belong to the church (not this teacher or that to this section or that) while it belong without distinction to Christ, and Christ, with all that is His, to God. The universal "you are Christ" swallows up the self-assertive and sectarian "I am of Christ." Those who used this cry arrogated the common watchword as their peculium; they erred by despising, as others by glorying in men.

(EGT)

(3) This explains the nature of these contentions. In almost all the apostolic churches there were contentions between the Jewish and Gentile converts.

It is plain from the contents of this and 2 Cor., that these contentions were fomented by false teachers, 2 Cor. 11:13, that these teachers were Hebrews, 2 Cor. 11:22, and that they endeavored to undermine the authority of Paul as an apostle.

(Hodge)

(4) There seems to have been no sense of personal rivalry between Paul and Apollos.

The indignant questions Is Christ divided? in v. 13 implies that Christ was being used as a party name. When the probable tendencies of the other parties mentioned here are compared with tendencies referred in the general argument of the letter, a process of elimination suggests that the "Christ-party" consisted of self-styled "spiritual men".

(Bruce)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 12, continued

(5) The first three slogans implied that those who used them boasted of the excellency, the special gifts, and the grand results attained on the part of the man whose name they vauntingly proclaimed.

The wrong and dangerous feature attendant upon the estimation in which these men were held was the fact that these friends should exalt these teachers to an unwarranted degree, pit the one against the other, and misuse their good names for the purpose of forming parties and wrong distinctions in the congregation.

I am of Christ - It will not do to place Christ into competition with man as the head of a party over against other parties. The fault of the Christ party is that it allows itself to become only a party and thus is also drawn into the party wranglings. (Lenski)

(the trouble was widespread)  
(6) Each of you indicates that everyone had chosen position.

Corinth boasted in men in the full sense of that word. It lined itself up with one person and detested the other, and such without any reason. Paul does not choose sides and ignores even the "Paul-party".

The sin rebuked was one of quarrelsomeness, a common evil in Greek democracies and here transferred to the church.  
(NIC)

The society was shaping the church instead of the church shaping society. RLD

(7) From the general tone of Paul's references to Apollos, and from all that we know of this disciple from other passages, it is clear that there was no difference in their teaching. The party choice would have been made on the basis of their methods of preaching. Probably Apollos was more elaborate and rhetorical than Paul.

(Tyndale)

## I Corinthians 1

## Verse 13

*μεμερίσται*

- Perf Pass Ind of *μερίζω*  
I divide into parts, I distribute,  
I divide, I part.

(1) Some of the best expositors under this as an assertion: Christ has been divided by your controversies. He is broken up into different party Christs. This gives a perfectly good and forcible sense, and is favored by the absence of the interrogative particle *μή*, which introduces the next clause.

Divided: so portioned up that one party may claim Him more than another.

Christ has the article.

Was Paul crucified for you? A negative answer is implied.

In the Name - into the name of Paul as the name of him whom you were to confess. (Vincent)

(2) The Christ has been divided! Torn in pieces by your strife.

*μερίζω* (here in perfect tense of resultful fact) denotes distribution, not dismemberment. The Christian who asserts, "I am Christ's in distinction from others, claims an exclusive part in Him, whereas the one and whole Christ belongs to every limb of His manifold Body.

Was Paul crucified? From the cross the apostle draws his first reproof, the point of which 6:20 makes clear - "You were brought with a price." The Corinthians were not Paul's or Cephas' - but only Christ's and all Christ's alone.

The cross was the ground of fellowship with Christ. Baptism, signaling personal union with Him by faith, its attestation. His converts will remember how Christ's name was sealed upon them, and Paul's ignored.

(EGT)

(3) The grounds of our allegiance to Christ are, first, that He is the Christ; second, that He hath redeemed us; third, that we are consecrated to Him in baptism.

Baptized in name of Paul - i.e. in reference to Paul, so that he should be the object of your faith and the one whose name you were to confess. (Hodge)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 13, continued

(4) This verse contains rebuke. Paul does not speak of the quarrels and their results but simply shows the absurdity of this discord.

One group of the church had made Christ's name its proper mark of distinction and had deprived, in so doing, others of Christ, a very sinful trait of character. The apostle thus points to the greatest sin of the Corinthians (3:23) since Christ is of the whole church.

To name oneself after Paul is equally sinful (There is a gradation in the sins of the Corinthians).

It was permissible to name oneself after Christ who was crucified for the church. They only sinned in depriving others of Christ. To name oneself after Paul was not permissible but constituted an offense to Christ.

(NIC)

(5) The apostle's indignation explodes in a series of questions.

Is Christ divided? Paul is envisaging an utter impossibility - Christ is one, and the church, which is His body, must be one.

The second question, was Paul crucified for you? also refers to something unthinkable. It directs attention to the centrality of the cross. The Corinthians with their emphasis on wisdom, seem to have overlooked this.

The third question reminds them that they had not realized the significance of their baptism. They had been baptized into Christ. Their allegiance accordingly was due to Christ alone.

(Tyndale)

(6) In a highly effective manner Paul at once explodes the folly of this entire party matter. He reduces the contentions of the Corinthians to absurdities.

The dividing refers to different kinds of Christ - a Paul Christ, an Apollos Christ, etc.

Paul is not flattered by these Corinthians who claim this attachment to him.

(Lenski)

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 13, continued

Note: Often we hear of Christians claiming and naming one particular preacher or teacher over another - they quote him with awe and reverence , promote his ministry, travel distances to hear him, etc. We have a tendency to criticize the preacher for this, as though it is his fault. But none of us would so criticize Paul - yet this happened to him. Even Paul had those who misunderstood and misinterpreted his ministry and gave undue adoration to hi. But we don't take this to mean he was an unethical and egotistical preacher who sought to gather followers about him. Even the greatest preacher can be abused by his listeners.

I Corinthians 1

Verse 14

(1) Paul had himself baptized very few of the Corinthians. He sees a providence in this; otherwise he might have seemed wishful to stamp his own name upon his converts.

(EGT)

(2) Paul speaks of baptism because at its administration the name of Christ is expressly mentioned, thus showing to whom the believers belong and for whom they may call themselves.

(NIC)



## I Corinthians 1

## Verse 17

ἀπεστείλεν

- Aor Act Ind of ἀποστέλλω  
I send away, I commission, I put forth.

κενώθη

- Aor poss subj. of κενόω  
 - I empty, I deprive of content; make unreal.

(1) The nucleus of the apostolic preaching was a fact - Christ crucified. To preach it as a philosophic system would be to empty it of its saving power, a truth which finds abundant and lamentable illustration in the history of the church. (Vincent)

(2) vv 17b-25 - The true Power of the Gospel. To "preach the Gospel" meant, above all, to proclaim the cross of Christ. In Corinth "the wisdom of the world" scouted this message as sheer folly (18). To use "wisdom of world" in meeting such antagonism would have been for Paul to fight the world with its own weapons and to betray his cause, the strength of which lay in the Divine power and wisdom embodied in Christ, a force destined, because it was God's, to bring to shame the world's vaunting wisdom (19-25).

But to Preach - the phrase opens a new vein of thought, and supplies the theme of the subsequent argument up to 2:6. Christ sent him to preach; what he has to preach is not a philosophy to be discussed, but a message of God to be believed.

"in wisdom of word" - in philosophical style.

To tell good news in wisdom of word is an implicit contradiction; "news" only needs and admits of plain, straightforward telling. To dress out the story of Calvary in specious rhetoric, or wrap it up in fine-spun theorems, would have been to "empty" the cross of Christ.

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 17, continued

The "power of God" lies in the facts and not in any man's presentment of them - (ill. arguing about the theory of gravitation and gravitation itself.)

Empty: To deprive of content, make unreal.  
(EGT)

(3) Paul's defense of his manner of Preaching  
vs 17-31

The reason he didn't baptize but a few - his great official duty was to preach the gospel. This led him to speak of the manner of preaching. It was one of the objections urged against him that he did not preach "with the wisdom of words." Through the remainder of this, and the whole of the following chapter, he assigns his reasons for thus renouncing the wisdom of the world - and resumes the subject of the divisions existing in the church at the beginning of the third chapter.

*He was not up-to-date, relevant "with it!"*

1 - His first reason for not teaching human wisdom is that God has pronounced all such wisdom to be folly. v. 19, 20.

2 - Experience had proved the insufficiency of human wisdom to lead man to a saving knowledge of God, v. 21

3 - God had ordained the gospel to be the great means of salvation, v. 21-25.

4 - The experience of the Corinthians themselves showed that it was not wisdom nor any other human distinction that secured the salvation of men.

They were in Christ, not because they were wiser, better, or more distinguished than others, but simply because God had chosen them - v. 26-30. The design of God in all this was to humble men so that he who glories should glory in the Lord. v. 31

## I Corinthians 1

Verse 17, continued

Paul's preaching was not a discourse characterized by wisdom; that is, the contents of which was human wisdom, instead of truths revealed by God.

Human wisdom - of human origin.

Wisdom of God - derived from God, the hidden wisdom, consisting in truths which human wisdom never could discover.

He was among them in the character, not of a philosopher, but of a witness.

None Effect - rendered powerless and inoperative. Whatever obscures the cross deprives the gospel of its power. (Hodge)

(4) The Corinthian wisdom with which they adorned the preaching of the Word must have been a specially persuasive form, which approached the wisdom of the world and was harmful to the contents of the Gospel.

All those forms harmed the gospel since they captured the attention of the hearers and thus the gospel of the cross did not come to its full rights. The Corinthians had not come to the point where they no longer believed in the cross, but they nevertheless attached themselves in such a measure to the wisdom of the world that Paul speaks of making a void of the cross.

Summary of 10-17. Paul's argument, which leads him from the disputes to the subject of baptism and from there to the preaching in wisdom of words, shows that he does not consider the quarrels of very great importance.

He shows much more interest in the questions concerning baptism and the preaching of the gospel. The quarrels alarmed him and troubled him especially because their cause was a trivial one.

The chief thing is that the Corinthians broke up the unity of the church for no good reason whatsoever. That is why Paul puts this ethical point first in this letter which is ethical in character. He does this also because the Corinthians did not see the greatness of their sin.

The point concerning wisdom is of far greater importance than that of the quarrels themselves.

(NIC)

## I Corinthians 1

Summary 10-17, continued

(5) Some at least of the Corinthians were setting too high a value on human wisdom and human eloquence in line with the typical Greek admiration for rhetoric and philosophical studies.

(They were overly influenced by their culture - interpreted their message and mission in the light of worldly thinking - They were reflecting the prevailing fads of men rather than the revelation of God.)

Wisdom of Words - That kind of preaching would draw men to the preacher. It would nullify the cross of Christ. The faithful preaching of the cross results in men ceasing to put their trust in any human device, and relying rather on God's work in Christ. A reliance on rhetoric would cause men to trust in men, the very antithesis of what the preaching of the cross is to effect. (Tyndale)

"No man can give at once the impression that he himself is clever and that Jesus Christ is mighty to save."  
James Denney

(6) With the word Gospel Paul reaches the great truth which he intends to elaborate more fully in this letter, this matter of preaching the Gospel and judging rightly those who do this preaching. The point at issue in Corinth is therefore at once added: to preach the Gospel not in word-wisdom....

This *σοφία* is beyond question a vital term in this first part of Paul's letter.

The danger was present that some would admire and desire to have preached to them a gospel that was fitted to the proud Greek learning of the day.

The Gospel is in no way to be accommodated to any modern scientific or other wisdom. The plea of modernists that certain Scriptural "categories of thought" are worn out and must now be replaced by modern categories is a species of deception that does away with eternal, unchanging verities under the claim that they are only temporary modes of thought.

## I Corinthians 1

Summary 10-17, continued

(A good illustration of this -- is the Christian Life Commission publishing pamphlet saying that having more than two children is being an irresponsible Christian, and urging Pastors not to recognize on Mother's Day, Mothers with large families - This is reflecting the worldly-wise population explosion scare rather than Word of God.)

Empty - The Gospel would not only lose some quality or some part of itself; it would evaporate entirely and leave only a hollow show of gospel terms and phrases.

Instead of saying that the gospel would be made empty, Paul refers to the "cross of Christ", because this is the very heart of the gospel. If the cross is cancelled or lost, the entire gospel is gone.

Everything else contained in the gospel radiates from this vital center. If this center is blotted out, all the rays emanating from it are dissipated in everlasting night. (Lenski)

Because it presupposes Man's sin  
 " " " O's Judgment - the  
 need of atonement

1:17, con't.

(7) The essential difference between the act of baptizing and that of preaching the Gospel, is that the latter is a wholly spiritual work belonging to the higher field of producing faith and giving new birth to souls; while the former rests in the lower domain of the earthly organization of the church. To preach the Gospel is to cast the net; it is apostolic work. To baptize is to gather the fish now taken and put them into vessels. The preacher gains souls from the world; the baptizer, putting his hand on them, acts as the single assistant of the former, who is the head of the mission. So Jesus Himself used the apostles to baptize (Jno. 4:1,2); Peter acted in the same way with his assistants; cf. Acts 10:48. Paul does not mean that he was forbidden to baptize; but the terms of his apostolic commission did not even mention this secondary function (Acts 9:15; 22:14,15).

There might be a more subtle way of appropriating souls to himself than that of baptizing them into his name, even that of preaching in such a way as to attract their admiration to himself by diverting their attention from the very object of preaching; Christ and His Cross; now this is excluded by the term evangelizing (preaching the gospel), taken in its true sense. Paul means, "I remained faithful to my commission, not only by evangelizing without baptizing, but also by confining myself to evangelizing in the strict sense of the word -- by delivering my message without adding to it anything of my own."

Evangelizing- to announce good news; denotes the simplest mode of preaching. It is the enunciation of a fact, to the exclusion of all elaboration of reason or oratorical amplification.

This second part of the verse contains the theme of the whole development which now follows. The formation of parties at Corinth evidently rested on a false conception of the Gospel, which converted it into the wisdom of a school.

The systematic and brilliant exposition of the fact of the cross would have the effect, according to Paul's phrase, of emptying it. A dialectic and oratorical mode of preaching may indeed produce an intellectual or aesthetic effect, but not transform the egoistical self.

The term emptying denotes an act which does violence to the object itself, and deprives it of its essence and virtue. Salvation by the cross is a divine act which the conscience must appropriate as such. If one begins with presenting it to the understanding in the form of a series of well-linked ideas, as the result of a theory concerning man and God, it may happen that the mind will be nourished by it, but as by a system of wisdom and not a way of salvation. It is as if we should

substitute a theory of gravity for gravity itself. The fact evaporates in ideas and no longer acts on the conscience with the powerful reality which determines salvation.

(Godet)

## VERSE 18

απολλυμένος

Present passive part. of ἀπολλύμι : I destroy, lose, am perishing (the resultant death being viewed as certain). (Souter)

In I Cor. 1:18, lit., "the perishing" where the perfective force of the verb implies the completion of the process of destruction. (Vine)

μωρία

foolishness. Primarily denotes dull, sluggish (from a root muh, to be silly); hence, stupid, foolish. (Vine)

(1) THE WORD OF THE CROSS - Lit., The Word, that, namely, of the cross. The second article is definitive and emphatic. The word of which the substance and purport is the cross.

PERISH--The present participle denotes process: they who are on the way to destruction.

(Vincent)

(2) What Paul asserted in v. 17 as intrinsically true, he supports by experience (v.18) and by Scripture (v.19), combining their testimony in v. 20.

ὁ λόγος takes its sense from εὐαγγελίζεσθαι (v.17); it is "the tale" rather than "the doctrine of the cross," synonymous with μαρτύριον (v.6) and κήρυγμα (v.21).

PERISHING AND SAVED: The two classes of hearers. The rejectors and the receivers of "the word" are in course of perishing and being saved respectively.

In the language of the N.T. salvation is a thing of the past, a thing of the present, and a thing of the future....The divorce of religion and morality is fostered by failing to note this, and so laying the whole stress either on the past or the future.

The appended personal pronoun ἡμῶν, "the saved, vig., "ourselves," speaks from and to experience: "You and I know that the cross is God's saving power."

The antithesis to μωρία is not, in the first instance, σοφία, but δύναμις Θεοῦ-- a practical vindication against false theory; saved men are the Gospel's apology. Yet because it is δύναμις, the word of the cross is, after all, the truest σοφία.



The double ἐστίν emphasizes the actuality of the contrasted results.

(EGT)

(3) The Word of the Cross: It is that through which the power of God is manifested and exercised.

This verse contains the reason why Christ sent the apostle to preach, and why he preached the doctrine of the cross and not human wisdom. That reason is because the doctrine of the cross alone is effectual to salvation. This proposition he proceeds to establish by a series of arguments designed to prove that the wisdom of the world cannot save men. His first argument (v.19) is derived from the express declaration of the word of God to this effect

(Hodge).

(4) The Nature of the Gospel. (1:18-3:4). The Gospel in its essence is not a wisdom, a philosophical system; it is a salvation. It is this thesis, summarily formulated in the second part of v. 17, which the apostle proceeds to develop in the following passage.

Undoubtedly the Gospel is not essentially wisdom; but it nevertheless contains a wisdom which is unveiled to the believer in proportion as the new life is developed in him, and which is really the only true wisdom.

In v. 18 the For announces the proof of the assertion (v.17): that to preach the gospel as a word of wisdom would be to destroy its very essence.

Perdition and salvation gradually come to their consummation in man simultaneously with the knowledge which he receives of the Gospel.

(Godet)

(5) In 18-25 Paul proceeds to develop the contrast between worldly wisdom and the wisdom of God. From the way he uses the term wisdom we deduce that some of the Corinthians had put great emphasis on this quality. In bold and forceful language Paul contrasts the way of God, which seems folly to the sophisticated Christians, with the ineffectiveness of that which the world counts as wisdom.

V. 18-- The preaching is lit., "the word." There is a contrast with "wisdom of words" in the previous verse. The term is a little unusual in such a passage. It directs attention to both the manner and the matter of the apostolic preaching. The message does not please the perishing, any more than the stark simplicity with which it was presented.

Wisdom is the opposite of foolishness, and we would accordingly expect Paul to speak of the gospel as the "wisdom of God." Instead, as in Rom. 1:16, he characterizes it as power. It is simply not good advice to men, telling them what they should do. Nor is it a message about God's power. It is God's power.

(Tndale)

\*\*Wisdom cannot deliver men from sin, only power. The great danger is to see our message as one of wisdom, good advice, rather than one of power. Much of our preaching has become nothing more than good advice. The folly is believing that if men know what is right, they will do it -- having both the desire and the power to do it. But sinful man has neither the desire nor the power to follow "good advice."

(6) The Word of the Cross: The message whose central theme is the cross of Christ.

(Bruce)

(7) The Word: This indicates once more that the Word is the main subject treated by Paul and that "wisdom" is a determinative of "word."

Paul speaks of the word of the cross, i.e., the preaching which deals with the cross of Christ.

He who attacks the character of the preaching, whether it be with respect to form or content, will easily arrive at the place of those who reject the cross. Earlier the apostle had indicated that it is possible to deprive oneself of the fruits of the cross through faulty preaching. He now goes beyond that and states the reason for writing as he did. The preaching of the cross always has results. Some call this preaching folly; they are those who perish.

God has commanded men to preach the cross of Christ as the only way of salvation (2:2) and those who despise this way will suffer the consequences.

The preaching of the cross is the power of God. The living God reveals Himself in it.

(NIC)

(8) The new paragraph begins with an explanatory ἵνα and connects with what Paul has just said about emptying out the cross of Christ. To nullify the cross is to nullify the gospel, no matter how this may be done.

For explains the matter by stating the nature of the cross: "For the word of the cross...foolishness". The first sentence points out where the trouble lies. Paul writes

the  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  of the cross, which is the same term that was used in the preceding verse. The word of the cross is the statement or doctrine by which the cross of Christ is set before the heart so that we may believe and accept it in trust.

Word cannot refer to mere form as distinct from substance. This word contains, offers and bestows all that is included in the cross, in Christ's sacrificial and atoning death.

Yet when some people hear the word they see no sense in it -- "foolishness". Others try to put sense into it. They add their own "wisdom" to this cross. After it is thus embellished, but in reality nullified, they are pleased with the gospel (as they call it) and with the cross.

Paul's one object is to show the utter folly of trying to improve the word of the cross by casting it into the word of human wisdom in order to get rid of its apparent "foolishness" for a certain class of people.

(Lenski)

VERSE 19

(1) Wisdom is the more general; mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense. Prudence is the special application of wisdom; its critical adjustment to particular cases.

(Vincent)

(2) The verbs in the future, I will destroy... I will set aside, express a general maxim of the divine government, which applies to every particular case and finds its full accomplishment in salvation by the cross.

ἀθετεῖν, to set aside, as useless or worth nothing. Not only has God in His plan not asked counsel of human wisdom, and not only in the execution of it does He deliberately dispense with its aid, but He even deals its demands a direct contradiction. The following verse forcibly brings out this treatment to which it is subjected in the gospel.

(Godet)

(3) Characteristically, Paul clinches his argument with a citation from sacred Scripture (Isa. 29:14). The principle Paul is expounding is thus nothing new. From of old God's way had stood in marked contrast with that suggested by the wisdom of men. Men have always felt that their own way must be the right one. But God confronts their "wisdom." He reduces their system to nothingness. He destroys their wisdom.

(Tnydale)

VERSE 20

<sup>2</sup>  
 ἐμωπάζω Aor. Ind. of μωπαίνω: make foolish, turn  
to foolishness.

(1) Scribe: An interpreter of the law.

Disputer: Only here in the N.T.. Referring to Grecian sophistical reasoners, while scribe refers to rabbinical hair-splitters.

Made Foolish: Proved to be practical folly; stupified it. Cf. Rom. 1:22. Possibly with a latent suggestion of the judicial power God to make it foolish.

(Vincent)

(2) "Where is...wise...scribe...disputer?" These orders of men are swept away from the field; all such pretensions disappear.

The world and God are at issue; each counts the other's wisdom folly. But God actually turned to foolishness the world's imagined wisdom. How, vv. 21-25 proceed to show.

(EGT)

(3) This is a challenge to the wise of every class and of every nation to disprove what he had said.

(Hodge)

(4) This exclamatory form has a triumphant tone. At the divine breath the enemy has disappeared from the scene; he is sought for in vain.

Disputer: Those who love to dispute, who seek truth in the way of intellectual discussion.

How have the wise of the world disappeared? By the way of salvation which God gives to be preached and which has the effect of bringing human wisdom to despair. By putting wisdom aside in the most important affair of human life, God has ipso facto declared it foolish. He has, as it were, befooled wisdom by presenting to it a wholly unrational salvation.

The Wisdom of this World: The term world refers to the nature of this wisdom -- that which proceeds from humanity apart from God.

Why did God choose to treat wisdom so rudely? Did He wish to extinguish the torch of wisdom which He had Himself lighted? V. 21 answers this question -- in the period anterior to the coming of Christ, reason had been unfaithful to its mission.

(Godet)

(5) ¶ In the manner of Isa. 33:18 a series of rhetorical questions hammers home the point. Pauls concern is to demonstrate that no human wisdom can avail before God.

Wise, scribe, and disputer of this world are three typical terms to describe those who are learned and acute as the world counts wisdom.