

## Called to Be Saints (1 Corinthians 1:1–9)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (11/8/2020)

### Introduction

We are experiencing events that I never dreamed I would see in my lifetime. Our response is that of David in Psalm 55:1–11. The psalm closes with a great encouragement: *“Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. But you, O God, will cast them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and treachery shall not live out half their days. But I will trust in you”* (vv. 22, 23).

The USA is on the verge of falling to her enemies who have successfully infiltrated her culture and political system. Are we witnessing her collapse due to internal rot, lack of vigilance from her patriots, and tolerance of vile practices? One cannot help but wonder whether current events are signaling the end of the age, or perhaps merely the end of a once great constitutional republic.

Where does that leave us, particularly as Christ followers? Are we also witnessing her collapse from internal rot due to lack of vigilance and tolerance sinful practices? In anticipation of a Biden victory, we are already seeing the Trump Accountability Project calling for severe retaliation against those who supported the Trump presidency (that is, those who tried to reverse the radical trend and restore the nation to her original roots).

Considering these uncertainties, my thoughts were drawn to Paul and the church in Corinth. There were two issues involved here: (1) Paul’s trials in this pagan culture to preach the gospel of Christ and see a church established to the glory of God, and (2) to correct serious problems among these former pagans within the church and to restore biblical principles in her faith and practice. One truth stands out—The will of God is worked out during many trials and uncertainties, but the will of God is also absolutely and infallibly accomplished. His will is paramount, and it will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Whatever the outcome of this election, take courage and trust Him.

### I. The Founding

1. The Lord established the church in Corinth on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18).
  - a. Paul was to meet devoted helpers, Aquila and Priscilla (or Prisca; Rom. 16:3, 4), who would become lifelong friends.
  - b. Paul came practicing his trade, the same (tentmaking) as Aquila’s, but he also began to press the gospel in the community.

He “reasoned” every Sabbath, seeking to persuade the Jews (traditional Hebraic Jews) and Greeks (Hellenistic Jews) in the synagogues about Jesus. It was slow and difficult work; so Paul had to *persevere* in this work. Paul persevered: *“He stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them”* (v. 11).

2. As expected, Paul experienced opposition at the same time (vv. 5–11).
  - a. When Silas and Timothy came, the intensity of Jewish opposition increased (v. 6). In an act of judgment, Paul shook his garments and declared his intent to focus only on the Gentiles. Nevertheless, God was saving people: Titius, a god-fearing Gentile, opened his house to the fledgling church, and Crispus, ruler of the synagogue, believed with his household. Then *“many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized”* (v. 8).

- b. The Lord appeared to Paul in a vision to encourage him to keep preaching and not fear any harm from the opposition (Acts 18:9, 10).
- 3. Paul's opposition from the Jews intensified, and they brought him before the Roman proconsul, Gallio, charging that Paul's religion was not legal under Roman law (v. 13).

Before Paul could even respond to the charge, Gallio refused to listen and drove the protesters from the tribunal.

## II. The Letter

1. The *writer*— "*Paul ... an apostle of Christ Jesus.*"
  - a. Paul was a Roman citizen from the city of Tarsus in Cilicia; yet he was also a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin, which accounts for his Jewish name, Saul. Many erroneously believe that God changed his name from Saul to Paul. Actually, *Paul (Paulus)* is the Roman pronunciation of the Hebrew, *Saul (Shaoul or Saoulos)*.
  - b. Paul briefly states his authority—an *apostle* of Christ Jesus by the will of God.
    - 1) An *apostle* was one sent out under the authority of a ruler with a message. The Lord Jesus specifically designated those who had authority to represent Him (Mark 3:14, 15).
    - 2) Whoever was to replace Judas must meet a qualification (Acts 1:21, 22) and Paul failed this test. Jesus Himself qualified him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
2. The *recipients*—the *church* of God in Corinth

Three things are stated to qualify this status:

  - a. The church must be *sanctified* in Christ Jesus—set apart to God in Christ.

This is a sovereign work of God that occurred before the foundation of the world when God wrote their names in His book of Life (Rev. 17:8).
  - b. The church members must be *called* to be saints —chosen to live out their special relationship in obedience to Christ (Rom. 16:1, 2; Rev. 14:12).
  - c. Each church member must share a common experience with all others who *call upon the name* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## What We Can Learn

The word *church (ekklesia)* identifies "a called-out people." They must be called out by Jesus to represent Him in the world. Each church has two addresses: a geographic location ("*at Corinth*") and a spiritual location ("*in Christ Jesus*"). Jesus said:

"*I will*"—Jesus, the sovereign Creator and Sustainer who *can* and *will* do all His will (Isaiah 46:10)

"*I will build*"—Jesus will do it, and we are His servants whom He employs to serve Him in the task.

"*I will build my church*"— we belong to Him and must be subject to Him and His will, evidencing His ownership.

"*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it*"— the church will be successful in *defending* against and *defeating* all enemies arrayed against her (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:57).