

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1137 – September 11, 2011 – 1 Corinthians 1:1-3
The Seeds Of Doctrine In Paul's Greeting

Let's open with 1 Corinthians 5:9. Last time we reviewed Paul's visit to Corinth in Acts 18, the 2nd missionary expedition. As usual Paul went to the synagogue and preached to the Jew first. And as usual, their overall response was one of rejection. So he said from now on I will go to the Gentiles. He moved into the house of Justus next door to the synagogue. In the midst of his ministry, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord Jesus Christ along with his whole household and many Gentiles were also believing. The gospel was becoming a threat to Satan and so the vitriol was rising and Paul's life was in danger so the Lord revealed to Paul in a vision that his life would be protected. This was revealed in the same way it was revealed to the OT prophets, by the divine I AM promise, and so Paul would be protected so he could teach the word and call forth God's elect and was able to teach the word without opposition for a year and six months. Then it happened, the Jews rose up and brought Paul before Gallio, the proconsul at the judgment seat and yet Gallio would not hear the case, he forced the Jews away from the judgment seat. And so it was a victory for Christianity in that Christianity was viewed by Gallio as a sect within Judaism and therefore it was authorized by Rome as an official religion. And so Christianity would have a period of protection in every province of the Roman Empire and Paul and others could preach freely. The conclusion of Paul's visit was that the Gentiles in the marketplace attacked the new leader of the synagogue, a man named Sosthenes, and they beat him profusely. Gallio didn't care, he didn't do a thing to try and stop it and so we have every indication that anti-Semitism was rising in the Roman Empire. But for the time being Christianity was given free reign to be propagated. So Paul is going to remain at Corinth after this judgment but not for long, soon he departs from Corinth on his way back to Antioch.

When we come to study the letter of 1 Corinthians it's important to understand that it is written five years after Paul's visit in Acts 18. The year is now AD56 and a lot has transpired in Corinth. Observe 1 Cor 5:9, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;" what do we gather from this verse? We gather that Paul had written them a previous letter, a letter that has since been lost. It was apparently written between his departure in AD51 and this letter in AD56. And we don't know the contents of that prior letter except Paul indicates that they were associating with immoral people and they took that to mean all immoral people and Paul was misunderstood because what he meant was immoral believers, not immoral people in general. But the full content of that prior letter never made it into the biblical canon. It may have been divine revelation, we don't really know. What we do know however, and this is important to understand, is that God has revealed more than has been captured in the canon. And this occurs by God's providence. God didn't intend for all His revelation to be captured in the canon of Scripture. What God intended to be captured was captured and what is captured in this book is totally sufficient for a life of godliness. So just because some revelation is not captured providentially in the canon of Scripture does not mean that it was not divinely revealed. And I want you to grasp that point. The amount God has revealed, verbally, in history, is more than God has captured, canonically, in history. Just as an example, was everything Jesus said and did divinely revealed? Of course, He did nothing of His own accord. He said and did always and only what the Father told Him to do. But was everything Jesus did captured in the biblical canon. Of course not. John says that if everything He did was captured it would fill more books than the whole world. So it is obvious that only a subset of what Jesus did was captured. And so the Bible teaches that the amount of revelation God has given in history is greater than the amount of revelation God has captured. And here we have notice that Paul had written them a prior letter that may have been God's revelation, but it was not captured. 1 Corinthians is the second letter Paul had written them and it undoubtedly is God's revelation, it has been captured.

Alright, we're going to start the verse by verse exposition today and to do so we're going to work off of a very simple outline. I'm not here to overwhelm you with details up front. We are going to divide the book in half. First, Reported Problems, chapters 1-6 and second, Raised Questions, chapters 7-16. And we're going to start with the first half, the Reported Problems. How

do we know there were reported problems? In 1 Cor 1:11 Paul says, “For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you.” So evidently Chloe (Gk. = “a young green shoot”) was a woman in the church at Corinth and some from her household, whether family members or servants, we are not told, but someone from Chloe’s house who was a part of the church at Corinth travelled to Ephesus and reported to Paul that there were problems in the church, certain divisions, four to be precise listed in verse 12, “Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” So the church at Corinth was divided into four sects; the Pauline Sect, the Apollos Sect, the Peter Sect and the Christ Sect. Apparently, when it comes to math, Christians are better at dividing than multiplying and that continues to be a problem today as the church splinters into sect after sect. So the situation at Corinth is that the one church has divided into four sects and this is wrong so Paul responds to the problem in chapters 1-6. He had received reports coming from some people at Chloe’s house that they had all these divisions.

Now, if you turn to 1 Cor 7:1 Paul tells us why he wrote the rest of the letter.ⁱ Paul had received some questions, so obviously someone from the church had written a letter to Paul with a series of questions, we don’t have that letter either, we don’t have the exact questions, all we have are the answers. So we have to infer from the answers the questions. Paul says, verse 1, “Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman” and he goes into an interesting discussion. But the point today is that Paul received a letter from the Corinthians asking certain questions and he turns to answer those questions in chapters 7-16. So that’s how we’ll divided it, chapters 1-6, Paul’s response to Reported Problems from Chloe’s people and chapters 7-16, Paul’s answers to Raised Questions.

Lastly turn over to 1 Cor 16:3. Where was Paul when he wrote to them? Notice verse 3, “When I arrive,” so Paul has definite plans to return but he sends this letter in advance to respond to the problems and answer the questions, plus he has some other things to do first, verse 5, “But I will come to you *after* I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; 6and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go.” But notice verse 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.” So he wants to visit them but not right away. One reason he says is he’s got things to do in Macedonia. And a second reason might be that he wants to give them some time to correct the problems that he addresses in this letter before he arrives. But verse 8, “I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; 9for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” So he was at Ephesus when he wrote the letter and he gives them a timetable, I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost. Pentecost was in the spring so he probably wrote this letter in late winter or early spring of AD56 before Pentecost, and he planned to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, then travel through Macedonia and finally arrive at Corinth by the winter and spend the winter with them. Hopefully by then they will have straightened up.

So that’s the situation. Now we turn to 1:1 and we can start the exposition. As we begin I encourage you to read through this letter in one sitting, I know it’s a long book and some of you can’t read 5 minutes and I rebuke you for that. If you can’t go five minutes without turning on the radio or playing a video game you are propagating the anti-educationalism of our age and your mind is turning to mush. Because the difference between an educated person and an uneducated person is that an educated person can’t wait to get five minutes to read, an uneducated person can’t stand to read for five minutes. So I hope you decide to start reading so you can get educated because Lord knows you’re not going to get it from the government. So do yourself a favor and read this book. It’s one of the only books God wrote.

1 Cor 1:1, **Paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother**, remember **Sosthenes**? In Acts 18? Who was **Sosthenes**? When Paul was in Corinth five years ago the leader of the synagogue was Crispus but he converted to Christianity so they appointed a new leader of the synagogue and his name was **Sosthenes**. He was the man who led the Jews in taking Paul before the judgment seat of Gallio and when Gallio refused to judge on these matters because he considered them matters that pertained to Judaism and not matters that concerned Roman law, he forced them away from the judgment seat, and the Gentile crowds in the market that day who were watching this took Gallio’s driving the Jews away as an opportunity to beat up on one Jew, **Sosthenes** and Gallio didn’t do a thing; he didn’t care if Jews got beat up, anti-Semitism was in the air and Jews were being persecuted everywhere. But Paul did care, and it’s a bit of a

speculation, but one thing's for sure, **Sosthenes** is no longer the leader of the synagogue in Corinth. Verse 1 says **Sosthenes** was a Christian. So we can speculate that after the beating **Sosthenes** received in the market at Corinth the only person who did care was Paul. All the other Jews were driven away. And what did Paul see but an opportunity, the Jews left Sosthenes for dead, and here I am, a fellow Jew, but a believing Jew; I love my fellow Jews, I want them to receive Jesus Christ. So Paul saw this as an opportunity to evangelize a fellow Jew and so it is possible that Paul took this man and tended to his wounds and it's these acts of kindness toward **Sosthenes** that either led this man to Christ or planted the seed that eventually led him to come to Christ.

In either case it is now five years later and **Sosthenes** is with Paul in Ephesus, and that's another thing of interest. Somewhere or another Paul and Sosthenes met up, because Paul did not take **Sosthenes** with him when he left Corinth, he took Priscilla and Aquila, but no mention of him taking **Sosthenes**. But now they have come together at Ephesus and they are ministering together. And we might ask why? The reason is because **Sosthenes** was a highly educated Jew, he was appointed leader of the synagogue in Corinth, and so he has tremendous background in the OT just like Paul had before his conversion. And all that was needed was this man to take all the OT texts and re-work them, re-organize them properly. Judaism had organized all the OT texts but they had organized them in a way that actually invalidated them. Paul had done that too as a student in Judaism because he was following the rabbinic train of thought, Pharisaism. But all that had to be done by these educated men was take the same texts they knew, that they had learned from boyhood, and re-organize them in the proper way, which wouldn't take too long. They didn't have to learn everything from scratch, they already had the OT text in their minds, so it was just a matter of re-organizing those texts. And it was these kinds of men, Paul and **Sosthenes** type men, that became powerful teachers of the word of God in the 1st century and that is what it takes to get Christianity moving. You cannot get Christianity moving with a bunch of weak, anti-intellectual people in the pulpit. You need powerful men who are called to this work and Paul knew that, that's why he now was training and working alongside this man **Sosthenes** in Ephesus and they were having a lot of success in ministry.

Now in vv 1-3 we have the Greeting. And you say, oh, how boring, another Greeting, every time I read one of Paul's letters there's the Greeting. Yeah, let me explain the greeting. There's a formula here, well recognized in the ancient world. It was the common way to start a letter, just like we have a way of doing it in the West. Today we say "to whom it may concern," which is a very impersonal address reflective of western cultures to embrace of man as a machine. And if man is a machine why address him as a person, why not just say, "to whom it may concern." But in earlier days in this country we would say, "Dear Bill or Dear Sue," it was very personal and that was because our culture used to believe that man was a person, it was worth getting to know someone and use their name, man was not viewed as a machine but he was made in the image of God. But in any case, that we have a commonly accepted way of starting a letter is well established. And the people of the ancient world had one and Paul is following it. Senders name, to Addressee, I greet you, I give thanks that and so forth.ⁱⁱ Now that's common to all ancient Greek letters and Paul follows it. But what can we learn from it? We can learn that you don't have to always be countercultural just for counterculture's sake. If there's something in the culture that is an acceptable form then use it, if not, then that's when you go counter. So all Paul's letters followed the ancient Greek structure but the more you study these greetings the more you realize, hey, there are all these similarities in all of Paul's greetings, but there are also differences and it's the differences that are important, that's where you learn something. So today I'm going to focus on the differences because as I was reading a commentary someone pointed out that the differences are like seeds and what Paul is going to do in the rest of the letter is show us how the seeds grow into plants. So the first several verses contain the seeds, the rest of the book are the plants that grow out of those seeds. And there are three seeds today that we will look at, that are not common to all of Paul's other greetings so we'll look at them. First is the Doctrine of Apostleship, second is the Doctrine of Sanctification and third is the Doctrine of the Church, and it's the last one, the Doctrine of the Church that's the grandest one of all and I think you'll learn some very interesting things about the Doctrine of the Church today. So understand, these three things are not just Paul randomly yak, yak, yakking, no, he is targeting issues very specific to the situation at Corinth.

Let's look at the first one, the Doctrine of Apostleship, verse 1; this is a seed that is going to grow into a plant in chapter 9. Chapter 9 is an entire chapter

devoted to the defense of Paul's apostleship. There were a lot of people who questioned Paul's apostleship, the reason is because he was a Johnny-come-lately, he was not a Christian on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2; he was a persecutor of Christians until his conversion in Acts 9, so that made Paul a questionable character in many people's minds. And so Paul, in many places he went, had to defend his apostleship and he's alluding to that defense right here in verse 1, **Paul called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**, so I'm an apostle he says, **by the will of God**, I'm not an apostle because of the will of man, I'm not an apostle because I'm so great. In fact Paul says later in chapter 15, I am the least of the apostles because I persecuted the Church of God, but I am an apostle nonetheless, **an apostle of Jesus Christ** how? **By the will of God**. That is, this is God's plan for my life.

So let's discuss the doctrine of apostleship. An apostle is "a messenger, an envoy, who comes in the authority of the sender." It's very important to understand that they come in the authority of the sender and not their own authority. So who's the sender? **Jesus Christ**, Paul is **an apostle of Jesus Christ**. So Paul's point, by calling himself an apostle is to say that I have authority because Jesus Christ appeared to me and sent me as His messenger.

Now all the apostles were hand picked by Jesus Christ, it's not true that the man chosen at the end of Acts 1 by the casting of lots was chosen by men and therefore not a real apostle. He was chosen by God because the casting of lots was a divinely prescribed method of discerning the will of God until Acts 2. And Acts 1 is before Acts 2. So they were following God's will at the time and ultimately it was Jesus Christ who chose the twelfth apostle named Matthias to replace Judas who turned aside from the office. That was the first category of apostle and the men in that category had to be with Jesus from His baptism by John until His resurrection and ascension. That was an essential criterion to be met. And in the plan of God it was an essential because in the plan of God the twelve apostles would be the foundation of the church and that foundation had to be in place before you could start building the church on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. So by the end of Acts 1 the foundation is in place, then in Acts 2 the church began to be built. Paul came later, much later, Acts 9. Paul was not with Jesus from His baptism by John until His resurrection and ascension. He may have known about Jesus and all that He

did, doubtless he did, but Paul did not qualify for that first category of apostle. He did however qualify for the second category of apostle. To be in the second category one had to personally see the risen Christ. And that's what Paul claims in 1 Cor 9:1. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen the Lord?" So those are the two categories of apostle and Paul is defending that he is of the second category. No one in the first category ever defends their apostleship in the NT because it was well-known by everyone that they were apostles. But Paul had to defend his because people would say, well, Paul, you're not of the twelve, you didn't come in in Acts 2, you came in in Acts 9, and therefore you are not a real apostle, you're sort of a second rate apostle even if you are one, and Paul is saying no, an apostle is an apostle, whether you're of the first category or the second category it makes no difference so far as authority is concerned. We've all been chosen by Jesus Christ. So just because I'm not of the twelve does not diminish my authority. And so right off the bat in verse 1 Paul plants a seed he will develop in chapter 9, **I am an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.**

Now the second seed is the Doctrine of Sanctification and that's in verse 2, **To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.** In those words Paul identifies them two ways; one as **the church...at Corinth**, and that will be our third seed, we'll discuss that later, but he also identifies them as **those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.** And we want to capitalize on this because there are many, many places in the letter where this seed grows into a plant. This gets seriously developed in virtually every chapter. Now understand that the idea that is dropped here by Paul is so offensive that many Christians are embarrassed by this verse. How could the carnal Corinthians be called **sanctified**. How could they be called **saints!** They don't look too saintly to me! How saintly are people who get drunk at the communion table? How sanctified are men who fornicate with their mother in law? Yet these are the people Paul says are saints and have been sanctified. Now both of those words come from the same root word, *agia-* which means "holy." Paul is calling these people holy. So we have to grapple with this because that does not appear to be the case at all. Yet there is no question that Paul is saying that. So why would Paul say that of these kind of people? The answer is that he is setting up a logic that he's going to develop in the book. One of the ways Paul tinkers with the minds of believers who are not living the Christian life is to get them to realize who they are **in Christ**

Jesus. To get them to understand their position **in Christ.** You'll notice that the verb **sanctified** is followed by **in Christ Jesus. They are sanctified** where? **in Christ Jesus.** Not as looked at all by themselves, but as looked at **in Christ Jesus.** So whatever it means to be **in Christ Jesus** is key. And we might note that the verb sanctified is in the perfect tense, so it means in the past they were completely sanctified with the effects reaching up to the present moment. That's positional truth. So they have been sanctified **in Christ** and they remain sanctified **in Christ.** So we have to know what this **in Christ** refers to. And what it refers to is the great doctrine called baptism of the Spirit. If you are **in Christ** then how did you get there? Answer? The baptism of the Spirit. Now having said baptism don't float off in your mind to a riverside. The word baptism that you find in the NT is a Greek word. At the Reformation the translators of this word didn't want to translate it because there was a debate about the mode of baptism; immersion or sprinkling, and they didn't want to deal with it so they just transliterated it. Well that was real slick because it got them off the hook, so now everybody in English reads baptize and if the church minister is Episcopal he'll say it's sprinkling and if the guy is a Baptist he'll say it's immersion. Really the word alone can't solve any of that, if you want to solve that then you have to go look at the word in its various contexts, but the core meaning of the word doesn't have anything to do with sprinkling or immersion, it has to do more with judgment/salvation and what I mean by that is there's a separation from something and a new identification with something else. Always with judgment/salvation there's a separation that's being made and part and parcel of that is a new identity. So the core of the word is to take on a new identity and in this case it's our identity **in Christ.** How did that happen? The baptism of the Spirit. At the moment of faith alone in Christ alone the Spirit baptized us and our old identity in Adam was erased and our new identity in Christ was established. Paul's way of saying that to the Corinthians is **you have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.** We are no longer in Adam but in Christ and this is a way of thinking about ourselves. Who am I? I am in Christ. So this is looking at our new identity as Christians and our new identity is one of absolute perfection because Christ is perfect. So that explains why Paul says they're **sanctified,** that explains why Paul says they are **saints,** that is why they are holy. It's because they are in Christ and Christ is perfect. Now it is vital to understand who you really are. It's realizing who you really are that brings victory in the Christian life. You cannot be victorious over sin if you continue to think I'm in Adam, I'm in Adam, I'm a slave to sin, no, you are not in Adam, you are in

Christ, you are a slave to righteousness. So up front Paul says, this is who you really are, you are in Christ, it obviously does not mean they are acting like new people in Christ. But it is a critical thing to realize if they are ever going to act like new people in Christ. I first must know who I really am, then I can know how I can really live.

Paul is going to develop this line of argument throughout the book, this is just setting you up, this is just planting a seed. But it's a very important seed to plant because to ever live as we really can we have to first know who we really are. So he's saying very early, you have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, you are a saint, this is your new identity, so then doesn't it follow that you should live a new lifestyle?

Alright, let's move on to the third seed that Paul develops in the letter, the Doctrine of the Church. Also verse 2, **To the church of God which is at Corinth**, that's pretty standard fare, I'm writing to a local church, but hold on a moment and look at the rest of the verse, **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:** Did you notice anything? He's addressed them as a local church, the church at Corinth, but what else has he done? He's connected them with every other local church on the planet, every other believer. How did he do that? Notice where he says **with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.** They at Corinth are **with** those believers everywhere else, in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Lystra, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, in Athens, even in heaven, martyrs like Stephen and James, those who died of natural causes, they are all interconnected. So we have the local church at Corinth and they are in connection with every other local church and believer on the planet. Now the concept here is of the church as one body. The church at Corinth is not the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the believers at Corinth linked together with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in one body that transcends Corinth. And to enhance that idea Paul says at the end of the verse, there is one Lord, **their Lord and our Lord**, the Lord of those at Corinth, the Lord of those at Rome, the Lord of those at Fredericksburg, the Lord of all believers wherever they might be.

So there are two concepts here we want to define right off the bat. The doctrine of the Church has two aspects; we call them the local church and the universal church. Those are not the same thing and the Bible talks about both, it uses church both ways. And both ways are taught in verse 2. Number one there's the local church at Corinth, at Athens, etc...what we might call the membership. You may have 185 people on the membership roll but only 105 of them are believers. Yet all 185 are part of the local church. So the local church is composed of a mixed group of believers and unbelievers, sometimes theologians call this the visible church because it's the physical people that go to some local church. So the local church doesn't distinguish between believer and unbeliever. The local church contains believers and unbelievers. Then there's the universal church and its all believers from the day of Pentecost until this very moment and believers only, whether they're on a church membership role or not, it's just believers. So it doesn't matter *where* you are, you can be in Corinth, you can be in Fredericksburg, you can be in New York City, you can be on the moon; where you are doesn't matter, if you're a believer you're part of the universal church. It also doesn't matter *when* you are, maybe you already died and went to heaven you're still part of the universal church. So the universal church is not a mixed group of believers and unbelievers, it's composed of believers only and all believers no matter *where* they are or *when* they are all linked together in one body that's being formed over the centuries. Which is why theologians sometimes call this the invisible church, you can't identify them all, you can't do an MRI of everyone's heart and get some physical indication that they're a believer or not. So we have the local or visible church, a mixture of believers and unbelievers in one place and the universal church, believers only in every place.

Now come back to verse 2 and let's identify the two aspects of the church. **To the church of God which is at Corinth.** Question: is that the local church or the universal church? That's the local church. They could have 500 members at Corinth, I don't know, 400 of them may be believers, 100 of them may be unbelievers. But the point is it's addressed to all 500 of the people that are joined to the church at Corinth. Then skipping what we've already done in verse 2, come to the last part where Paul says *with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Question: is that the local church or the universal church? That's the universal church. Why? Because only believers call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So

he's only talking to the real believers here and so you can see both the local and universal church are touched on in verse 2.

Now what is Paul doing by talking this way and why is he doing it? What Paul is doing is he's linking; you, church of Corinth are tied in with every other believer on the face of the earth. He says you're all in one big body. You are linked with every other believer at every other location. Now why would he be linking them in with every other believer on the planet no matter what local church they are a part of? I think it is because there is only one pattern for all local churches to follow so far as practice is concerned and they are not following it. Turn to 1 Cor 11:16. They had some strange things going on at Corinth; they were not doing church the way other churches did church. And Paul is saying, hey, you guys at Corinth are way off the page, you are acting like you are the whole body of Christ but you are not the body of Christ, the body of Christ is much bigger than your local church and we can't have you acting out of sync with the rest of the body of Christ because the body of Christ is one body, not 94. Why would that be? Because there's only one head of the body, one Lord, Jesus Christ. So the argument Paul is making is that local church expression should match up between one local church and another. They shouldn't vary too much. Notice verse 16, "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God." So he's saying, and this is just an example there are others, but practically, if I walk from one town to another town, say town A to town B the church in town A ought to be following the same pattern as the church in town B. There is one pattern that should be followed so that if you were to walk from a church in town A to a church in town B then it should be like walking from one side of the room to the other, they ought to link and have the same pattern of expression of faith. But the church at Corinth was like walking into a different house altogether, they were doing their own thing and doing it however they wanted to do it. And Paul says, no, that's not the way it should be, when believers walk from town A to town B they shouldn't walk in the door and say, what in the world is going on here? This is nothing like my church back home. But that's what the church at Corinth was like. It was totally out of sync with all the other local churches. And Paul is saying there is only one pattern. Why? Because there's only one universal church. And all believers are linked to one another in that church and we all have one LORD. And if we all have one LORD and He rules the universal church, He's the head of this body, then when the local parts of the body go to express

themselves doesn't it follow that the one LORD would instruct them to all express themselves after the same pattern? Obviously He does, we don't have one LORD over the church at Fredericksburg and another LORD over the church in Boerne. If we did then yeah, every church would follow a different pattern. But they don't, so we should all follow the same pattern in a seamless integration.

Now I imagine if this was taught in churches today it would really shake things up a bit, it would be distressing at the least because we all know that when you go from one church to another they often seem nothing alike. It seems like a lot of churches are doing like Corinth. They're acting like they are the entire body of Christ and therefore they have their distinct pattern for how they express themselves in the local church. And Paul is saying that is way out of line, you do not have the right to develop your pattern however you want to because you are linked with every other believer on the planet and we all have the same LORD and He directs us into the same pattern, not different patterns. So what are you doing off in left field?

Now by pattern Paul doesn't mean in every detail. Paul means things like, how the Lord's Supper is observed, how Spiritual Gifts are exercised, those kinds of things, there is a pattern, an order to these things and we ought to be able to walk into a church in South Africa and see the same pattern we have here in South Texas. The pattern ought to be universal.

So in conclusion, it has been observed that this epistle says more about the nature of the church than any other epistle in the entire NT. As Gordon Fee says, "Perhaps the single greatest theological contribution of our letter...is Paul's understanding of the nature of the church, especially in its local expression."ⁱⁱⁱ Notice that last part, especially in its local expression. That there is a definite pattern as to how the church should worship is a major contribution of 1 Corinthians. And what it means practically is that whether we're Chinese Christians or American Christians or Australian Christians, when we pay attention to this book and listen to our Head, who is Christ, then it naturally works it's way out in a specific expression so that whoever the Christian is who walks in the door, they say, hey, that's the same pattern that we follow and there's an instant bond.

So we have three doctrines Paul has mentioned so far. One is the Doctrine of Apostleship. Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. So these words are the words of Jesus Christ, they carry His authority, they are not Paul's words, Paul is just a messenger. Then we saw the Doctrine of Sanctification. Paul says you have been and are sanctified, you're saints. But they certainly didn't look like saints. But Paul's point is they are saints in Christ. They have been baptized by the Spirit into Christ and since Christ is perfectly sinless and they are in Christ then their new identity is one of perfection. So logically they should live sanctified lives. Finally we saw the Doctrine of the Church and the point here is there is the local and universal church and the local church is just a part of the universal church. Since this is the case and since there is one Lord who is the head over all then there ought to be one pattern of worship among churches so I can go from Africa to Asia to North America and walk from church to church and see the same pattern of seamless integration. It ought to be obvious the world over that we are Christians and we have one Lord. And when we do it's a testimony to our one Lord.

So next time we'll press on to vv 4-9 and see some more seeds Paul wants to plant in their minds, things about spiritual gifts that he will develop in chapters 12-14.

ⁱ Chapter 7 is a major break in the letter because it begins with *peri de*, "Now concerning," and *peri de* is the way Paul indicates he is turning to a new subject. So from here on out he's going to use *peri de* each time he addresses a new question (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 15:1, *de* only; 16:1).

ⁱⁱ Thiselton, A. C. (2000). *The First Epistle to the Corinthians : A commentary on the Greek text* (62). Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tom Constable. (2003; 2003). *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (1 Co 1:2). Galaxie Software.

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2011