

I Corinthians 1:1-3

The positional identity of the Christian

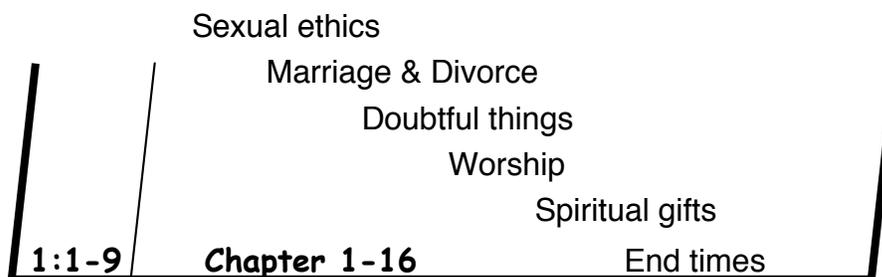
“¹ Paul, called {as} an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, ² to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their {Lord} and ours: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

A. Corinth, the ancient city.

- **A wealthy commercial center** - an outdoor theater seating 20,000 people. This was a large city with a lot of activity.
- **Korinthiazomai = to fornicate** - temple of Aphrodite with 1,000 prostitutes. Corinth was noted for its sexual debauchery.
- Its population was **cosmopolitan** - a mixture of Greek, Roman, and Asian peoples.
- Paul visited this city on his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys and planted a church there. Paul lived in Corinth for 18 months with Aquila and Priscilla. Paul wrote the church at Corinth an earlier letter (5:9) which has been lost. The church at Corinth wrote Paul a letter with several questions (7:1). We do not have this letter and must guess at its contents based on Paul's response in I Corinthians which was written about 56CE.

B. An overview of I Corinthians.

God's Grace and the abuse of it.

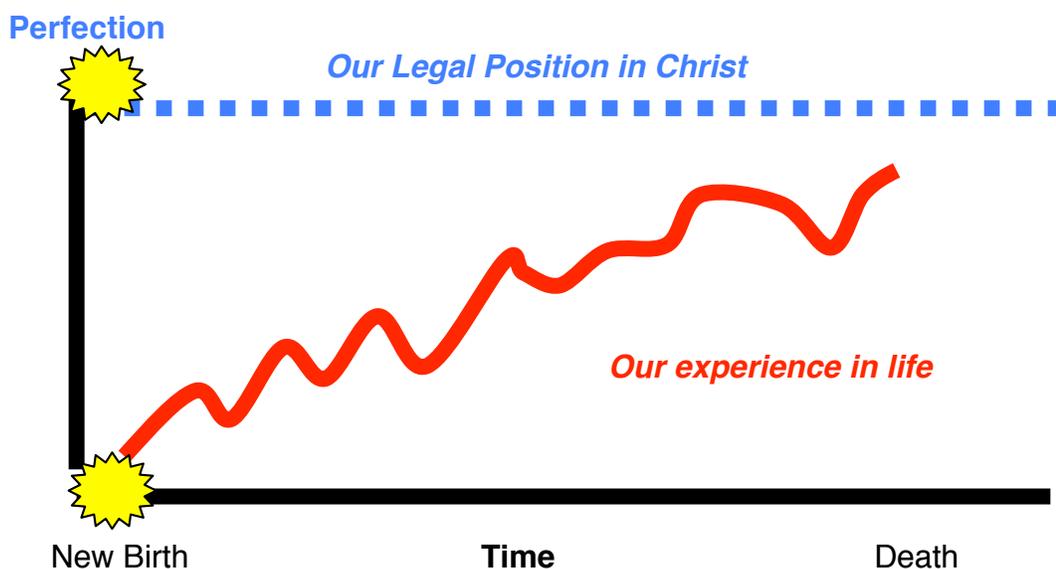


C. The nature of the Christian - "Saints by calling"

1. **"Sanctified", "saint"** are terms that mean "set apart for sacred use. In the Greek language they are related to the term translated "holy." There are two contexts in which something can be said to be "holy".
 - In the temple, for example, the tools of worship (altar, etc) were said to be holy. This holiness was **ascribed** by the religious system and had to do with

the official or legal status of the object. We call this holiness - "Position" or status by virtue of Divine calling.

- Holiness can also refer to an **achieved** condition whereby a person's moral record is consistent with God's calling or will. We call this holiness - "Walk" or life experience.
 - The believer is referred to in both ways. In I Corinthians it is the believer's **Position** that is in view.
2. **"have been"** indicates that the believer's positional holiness or sanctification is a completed work. The Corinthian Christians were already perfect "positionally" in the eyes of God. This, in spite of the fact that they were far from holy in their actual behavior as indicated by 3:3 "for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not **walking like mere men?**"
 3. **"in Christ Jesus"** makes it clear that the believer's status or position is tied to his or her identity with Christ who is perfect righteousness.
 - The believer's holy position is unique to the Christian Gospel.
 - It is about Christ's righteousness for us not in or through us.
 - It is acquired by our faith not our moral merit or discipline.
 4. **"by calling"** is a reference to God's choice not ours.
 - This is the term used to describe God's chosen people - Israel.
 - It indicates that the believer's position is ascribed by God's sovereign grace.
 - It indicates that the believer's position is a legal title and not tied to the believer's actual performance.
 5. The believer's identity is established in two spheres.



E. Positional truth:

1. Distinctives of Positional truth.
 - a. It is **non-experiential** - it consists of facts about us that may not be felt by us.
 - b. It is **not progressive** - it is complete and cannot be improved upon.
 - c. It must be **learned** through teaching - it is known through the revelation of Scripture.
 - d. It is **acknowledged through faith** - it is accepted only as we believe what the Bible says.
 - e. It is not related to human merit.
 - f. It **fully satisfies** the demands of a perfectly holy God.
2. The following chart gives a comparison of our position in Christ and our experience as Christians.

Our position in Christ	Our experience in Christ
regeneration	trust
sealing with the Spirit	assurance of salvation
indwelling of the Spirit	filling with the Spirit
justification	freedom from condemnation
member of the body of Christ	fellowship with believers
Children of God	Disciples of Christ
Static	Dynamic
Complete and perfect	Incomplete and imperfect

3. The pattern of Paul's letters reflects a sensitivity to the nature of positional truth.

The first part of the epistle	The second part of the epistle
Identity	Responsibility
Wealth in Christ	Walk as Christians
Security	Significance
Justification	Sanctification
Indicative	Imperative

4. Christians are "children of God" and also "disciples of Christ". These two expressions refer to different aspects of the believer's life.

A child of God	A disciple of Christ
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Our legal status	Our experiential status
This is unchanging	This is dynamic
This is a condition dictated by God's choice	This is a condition dictated by our choice

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