BUILT DIFFERENT

LESSON ONE

COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY NOTES

THE IMAGE OF GOD

The *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* has a helpful explanation of what is meant by the image of God:

IMAGE OF GOD Biblical designation for the unique nature, status, and worth of all human beings as created by God.

Christian thinkers have tried to locate the image of God (*imago Dei*) in various dimensions of man's being, including man's spirit, soul, rationality, will, mind, personhood, immortality, and even his physical body. But Scripture is not specific as to exactly what it is about man that constitutes the *image of God*. The *image of God* cannot be reduced to one attribute or any combination of attributes of man. The biblical portrait is more holistic. The entire man, as a human being, images God.

Creation The biblical depiction of the image of God begins "in the beginning" when "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness,' " (Gen. 1:26a NASB). The Hebrew word "image" (*selem*) refers to a representation, image, or likeness; it often refers to the way that an idol represented a god. "Likeness" (*demut*) means "similar in appearance," usually visual appearance, but it can also refer to audible similarity. Taken together, "likeness" complements "image" to mean that man is more than a mere image; he is a likeness of God. Yet, regardless of whether one argues from definition or word order, attempts to distinguish sharply "image" from "likeness" are misguided. For centuries theologians have tried to contrast the "image" (as the physical, natural or rational part of man) over and against the "likeness" (as the spiritual, moral, and volitional part of man). While the terms *selem* and *demut* complement one another, three subsequent references to 1:26 all confirm that these two terms are essentially interchangeable ideas in the common Hebrew literary style of parallelism. On the one hand, in 1:27 "image" is used without "likeness." On the other hand, in 5:1 "likeness" is used without "image." In 5:3, both terms are used again in tandem but are in transposed order compared to 1:26. In any case, all three passages point back to 1:26 and communicate the big idea of God's image.

In understanding the image of God, it is more important that the immediate scriptural context of the original divine pronouncement in 1:26 is the creation of the animal kingdom. In contrast to the animal creation, humankind is made in the image of God in a separate act of creation. Man originates apart from any connection with the animal creation and certainly not from evolution. Also, for the first time in the creation narrative, the divine "let Us" is used in conjunction with the creation act. Added to this, the immediate scriptural context after this introduction of the "image of God" is the additional charge that man "subdue" the earth and "rule over" all of its other creatures (1:26, 28). On the surface, man's earthly authority here sets him apart from the rest of creation. Below the surface, this dominion *imago Dei* motif stands in contrast to ancient pagan religious belief that only ruling kings enjoyed royal standing before the gods and men, as evidenced by their dominion which they presumed to exercise on behalf of their deities. In contrast the biblical picture of *imago Dei* means that all human beings, not just kings, possess special royal status as God's appointed stewards over the earth. By virtue of mankind's ruling over the rest of God's creatures and earth, every member of the human race somehow represents and reflects the sovereign Lord of creation.

Procreation Both sexes reflect the image of God as "male and female" (1:27) and were commanded to "be fruitful and multiply" (1:28). This population mandate was inaugurated in Gen. 5:1–3 with the clear implication that the *imago Dei* was passed from Adam and Eve to their son Seth. This text frames the image of God around the theme of sonship. When Luke references Gen. 5:1–3, he calls Adam the "son of God" (Luke 3:38 HCSB). These two passages together communicate a common idea: from God, Adam received the *imago Dei*; from Adam, Seth received the *imago Dei*. Adam's sin and its negative consequences for the entire human race without doubt marred the image of God, as no aspect of man's being was unaffected by the fall. Yet it is presumptive to assume that the image of God was completely lost through sin. To the contrary, Seth and his progeny received and passed down the image.

COMMENTARY NOTES

This multifaceted image of God in man, as represented in the creation-procreation themes of stewardship and sonship, is also present in Ps. 8. Here "man" and "son of man" are made "little less than God" and given glory, honor, and dominion (Ps. 8:3–8). So much does sinful man still bear that image that Paul states that fallen man "is God's image and glory" (1 Cor. 11:7 HCSB). While sin distorted and disfigured the image or God in man, it did not diminish its worth. In fact, post-fall human life is still sacred precisely because of the *imago Dei*, so sacred that it should not be taken (Gen. 9:6–7) or cursed (James 3:9).

Incarnation However, much of mankind images God by virtue of stewardship and sonship, only one man is the true image of God, with the full authority of the Father, as the only begotten Son of God. Jesus Christ "is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4 HCSB); "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15 HCSB). This is the great fact of the incarnation (John 1:14, 18; Phil. 2:5–8). As the only God-Man, among men Jesus Christ alone mirrors God as "the exact expression of His nature" (Heb. 1:3 HCSB). As such, Jesus Christ is God's ultimate steward and God's true Son (Heb. 2:6–8).

Redemption While the image of God in man was injured as a result of sin, that damage is more than countered by the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, for those who believe. The Christian is to "put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator" (Col. 3:10 HCSB; cp. Eph. 4:24). "Reflecting the glory of the Lord," the believer is progressively sanctified, "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18 HCSB; cp. Rom. 8:28–29).

Glorification Because of the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, believers are promised a final transformation into the likeness of Christ at His return. "As we have borne the image of the man made of dust, we will also bear the image of the heavenly man" (1 Cor. 15:49 HCSB; cp. 42, 45–48). While there may be much about the image of God that Christians cannot understand or know in their current state, the revelation of Jesus Christ will change believers for eternity. "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2 HCSB; cp. Phil. 3:21).[1]

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1–3

In the *Pillar New Testament Commentary*, Roy Ciampa shows the importance of Paul's seemingly customary greeting:

1:1 Like most letters in Paul's day 1 Corinthians begins with a salutation consisting of the form: A (v. 1) to B (v. 2), greetings (v. 3). In identifying himself Paul draws attention to the fact that he is an *apostle*, an agent or messenger of *Christ Jesus*. This assertion appears in all of Paul's epistolary prescripts with the exception of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon. In 1 Corinthians, as in Galatians, it functions to bolster his standing in a community where at least some were questioning his authority.

Paul stresses the divine origin of his apostleship in two ways: he was *called* to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, probably an allusion to his experience on the Damascus road; and his apostleship is *by the will of God*. It was not of his own choosing (cf. 15:5–7 and 10: "By the grace of God I am what I am"). This conviction produced in Paul a rare combination of genuine humility and supreme confidence, a profound sense of both privilege and obligation. Paul's reference to his own apostleship, if understated here, is more fully developed later in the letter. In 9:1–2 he reminds the Corinthians that their own favorable standing before God is a result of his "work in the Lord" and that they are "the seal of [his] apostleship," thus highlighting the direct relevance of Paul's status and stature for the Corinthians' ongoing spiritual life. Further, in 4:14–16 he admonishes them as their "father," another way of referring to his role as the apostolic founder of the church. And in 15:1–2 Paul explicitly reminds them that their salvation came about when Paul preached the gospel to them.

[1] Johnson Jerry A., "Image of God," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 806–807.

COMMENTARY NOTES

On eight occasions Paul cites others in the address of his letters, in this case *our brother Sosthenes*. Sosthenes is not mentioned elsewhere in Paul's letters. The bare reference to him here suggests that he was known to the Corinthians. It is quite possible that he is the "Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue," mentioned in Acts 18:17, who was treated roughly by the bystanders at Gallio's tribunal. Perhaps he later became a Christian and traveled to Ephesus with Paul. Why does Paul refer to Sosthenes here? It is not that he is a co-author; most of the verbs and pronouns in the letter are in the first-person singular. 1 Corinthians 16:21 implies that Paul did not write out the letter, but dictated it to someone, which was a common practice in his day. Since greetings from those with Paul in Asia (Minor) are left until 16:19–20, Sosthenes may be Paul's amanuensis or personal secretary, although we cannot be certain.

1:2 Paul writes *to the church of God in Corinth*. Since there were probably several house churches in Corinth, "[t]he singular [church] indicates already Paul's intention to call them to unity—they are one church, God's church." They belong to God, not to any of their teachers or leaders (cf. 3:21–23). The term church referred to Israel as the gathered people of God in the LXX and to the public political assembly in a Greek city. Paul uses it to mean the local community of believers. The addition of "of God" to "church" is unique to 1 and 2 Corinthians in Paul's epistolary prescripts. The words are echoed in 3:9 in further descriptions of the church in Corinth ("the field *of God*, the building *of God*") and recall the origin of Paul's apostleship (v. 1), which is also (by the will) *of God*. In apocalyptic Judaism, the equivalent Hebrew expression for *church of God* is used to refer to God's eschatological people. Roloff suggests that the term was used by Paul "because it corresponded with the eschatological self-understanding of the Church, which understood itself to be the company elect by God and determined by him to be the center and crystallization-point of the eschatological Israel now being called into existence by him." Thus, when Paul designates the Corinthians the *church of God*, he is not comparing them to any other club or society in town but evokes their place in God's cosmic plan.

Paul gives a more elaborate description of the church to which he is writing than in any of his other letters. The church in Corinth consists of *those sanctified in Christ Jesus*. They are set apart for God's special purpose and use, just as the utensils in the Temple, the priests, and so on. They are holy, that is, a peculiar and distinctive group in Corinth. *Sanctified* here is a perfect passive participle, which, according to recent studies of verbal aspect, stresses the present state of affairs. Thanks to Christ's work on the cross, believers find themselves in a state of sanctification (are now sanctified), made acceptable to God (Rom. 15:16) and able to enter into and enjoy his presence." The phrase in Christ Jesus refers to "their faith-union with Christ, through which they share his risen life" (cf. Acts 26:18). Sanctification in the New Testament generally does not refer primarily to growth in holiness but to God's taking possession of believers. However, those *sanctified in Christ Jesus* are intended to serve the purposes of God and his glory. Because God has sanctified them, they should worship him in holiness. In Romans 15:16, Paul describes his own apostolic ministry as "the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, *sanctified* by the Holy Spirit." It is ironic that the Corinthian Christians are thus described since in so many ways they are behaving no differently from other people in Corinth. They act as though they belong to the world rather than to God. They use secular courts, mimic the styles of secular leaders, and dine in pagan temples; to act "like mere human beings" (3:3) is to deny their sanctification.

So important is their consecrated condition that Paul states that they are *called to be his holy people. Hagios* in this phrase is regularly translated "holy" (cf. 16:1, "God's people") and is one of Paul's favorite designations for all Christians (cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:7; 8:27; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). The term derives from Exodus 19:5–6, where Israel is called "a holy nation" set apart by God for himself through the events of the exodus (cf. Deut. 7:6; 26:19; Jer. 2:3). In later writings it was used more narrowly to refer to the elect within Israel who were destined to share in the blessings of the messianic kingdom (Dan. 7:18–27; *Psalms of Solomon* 17; many Qumran texts). That they are *sanctified in Christ Jesus* is further explained in the statement that their calling is to be God's holy people. Sainthood in Paul's letters is not some elevated status reserved for a few extraordinary individuals, as regrettably in much modern usage. It refers to the sanctity of all true believers who are saints by virtue of God's call to salvation and are expected to bring him glory.

COMMENTARY NOTES

It is significant that Paul identifies the church as a singular body (*the church of God*) and then twice as a composite of individuals (*to those sanctified and called*). By referring first to the church as a whole and then collectively Paul excludes any form of individualism and one-upmanship. Although Mitchell overstates the importance of the theme of unity in the letter, it is an important theme, and as she points out, "the attempt to unite diverse individuals into a cohesive community—is thus alluded to already in the prescript." As Paul will go on to say in 12:27, "you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

Paul's description of the Corinthians in v. 2 mirrors elements of his self-description in v. 1. He is an *apostle* by *calling*; they are *holy people* by *calling*. He is an apostle of *Christ Jesus*; they are sanctified *in Christ Jesus*. He is an apostle *by the will of God*; they are *the church of God*. If Paul claims for himself a high station in v. 1, v. 2 accords with the Corinthians' considerable dignity and confirms his generally high opinion of them in spite of their many failings.

It is not just the Corinthian believers who are called to be saints, but they *together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ* (cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). Paul gives them a gentle reminder that the holy people who belong to God extend far beyond their local congregation. Unity in one locality is to reflect the inherent unity of God's people everywhere. This unity is based on their common relation to the "Lord Jesus Christ," not primarily on a common creed or experience. A church that is aware of its connection to the church universal is less likely to be absorbed in its own problems.

Those who *call on the name of our Lord*, like "holy people," is another way of referring to all Christians (Acts 9:14, 21; 22:16; 2 Tim. 2:22). Those who thus call on the name of the Lord have already come to acknowledge him as the only true God, the one worthy of their worship and the source of all true hope. The Corinthian believers called upon the Lord when they believed and were saved (cf. Rom. 10:12–14), and they continue to address him in prayer and worship and acclaim him in their meetings.14

Paul mentions that the Corinthians are united with all those who call on the name of the Lord, literally, "in every place." A key theme in Deuteronomy is the Lord's selection of one particular place where people would call on his name (understood to refer to Jerusalem). Repeated reference is made to "the place which the Lord your God will choose to have his name called upon" (cf. Deut. 12:11, 21, 26; 14:23–24; 16:2, 6, 11; 17:8, 10; 26:2). Rather than refer to that place, however, Paul says that the Corinthians join those who call on the name of our Lord "in every place." He is the only New Testament author to use the expression (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:8), and he uses it to refer to the worship of God which is spreading around the world through his ministry to the Gentiles.

The expression echoes Malachi 1:11 LXX,16 which (in a context of frustration over the way the Lord is being worshiped in Jerusalem) prophesies a future time when God would be worshiped by Gentiles "in every place": "From the rising of the sun until its setting my name will be glorified among the Gentiles, and in every place18 incense is offered to my name and a pure offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord Almighty." Similarly, Haggai 2:7 anticipates a time when the Gentiles will glorify God in his Temple: "all nations will come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts."

The echo of Malachi 1:11 in 1 Corinthians 1:2 suggests that the Corinthians are part of the fulfillment of God's plan to be worshiped among all the Gentiles and that it is Paul's ultimate purpose in writing to them to see them play their part in fulfilling this worldwide eschatological vision by glorifying God (see 6:20b and 10:31b). If Malachi's purpose and message was intended to help his audience "come to terms, mentally, spiritually and ethically, with the non-appearance of the new eschatological beginning" which had been expected with the return from exile, Paul's goal in 1 Corinthians is to get the Corinthians to come to terms, mentally, spiritually and ethically, with its appearance. It is this vision of God's eschatological plan, and the Corinthians' failure to act in a way that coheres with it, that governs Paul's response to them in this letter.

COMMENTARY NOTES

The final words of v. 2, literally *theirs* and *ours*, could modify *everywhere* (literally, "in every place"), which immediately precedes in the Greek, or *our Lord Jesus Christ*, as in the TNIV: their Lord and ours. The latter is preferable. Lightfoot explains the need for the words in connection with Paul's reference to *our Lord* earlier in v. 2 and their significance: " 'Our Lord, did I say—their Lord and ours alike.' There is a covert allusion to the divisions in the Corinthian Church, and an implied exhortation to unity." The Lord belongs to all those who call upon his name, not just to Paul and the Corinthians. Later references to "our Lord" in 1:10; 6:11; 8:6; 12:3 recall this fundamental point. *Their Lord* refers to the Lord of all those who call on his name in every place, thus suggesting the universal nature of Christ's lordship. The expectation that universal glory and worship would be given to God is at the heart of the significance of the lordship of Jesus Christ. His postcrucifixion exaltation is understood by Paul and other New Testament authors to inaugurate the long-awaited time of the universal and eternal kingdom of God which would result in every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that "Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*" (Phil. 2:11; cf. Rev. 15:3–4).

1:3 Paul offers his characteristic greeting, *grace and peace*. The standard Greek greeting literally meant "to rejoice,"24 but in salutations came to mean "greetings," as in the letter of Acts 15:23–29 and James 1:1. The most common word in Semitic formulas of greeting and farewell was *shalom*, "peace." However, Greek papyrus letters written by Jews in Egypt and the two Greek letters from the Bar Kokhba Revolt use the Greek greeting. Paul's greeting must have sounded very distinctive in the first century. Some Jewish letters in Aramaic added "mercy" to "peace," the Greek equivalent of which is a more common word in the LXX than "grace" (cf. Gal. 6:16 and 2 John 3: "grace, mercy and peace"). Paul's *grace and peace* is probably his own creation. The two words sum up beautifully Paul's gospel, drawing attention to God's beneficence and bounty, *grace*, the cause of salvation, and the well-being and welfare of those who are saved, *peace*, the outcome of salvation. As Fee observes, "the one flows out of the other." "When one Christian wishes grace and peace to another he prays that he may apprehend more fully the grace of God in which he already stands, and the peace he already enjoys."28 *Grace and peace* are Paul's shorthand for the eschatological benefits that we have received in Christ.

Reinforcing the eschatological context for this greeting is the fact that both *grace and peace* come from *God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. The three titles used for God and Jesus here ("Father," "Lord," and "Christ") are all informed by biblical and Jewish eschatological thought. In relation to Jesus, "Lord" and "Christ" draw from messianic expectation, together pointing to the universal lordship of the Davidic king and Son of God. Although not often recognized, the fatherhood of God is frequently associated with the exodus and the second exodus (eschatological redemption) in the Old Testament (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:5–20; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:9; Hos. 11:1–11). This eschatological association becomes even clearer in intertestamental Jewish writings. For example, *Jubilees* 1:24–25, in speaking of the eschatological redemption of Israel, cites God as promising: "I shall be a father to them, and they will be sons to me. And they will all be called 'sons of the living God.' And every angel and spirit will know and acknowledge that they are my sons, and I am their father."

Both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ cooperate in securing salvation and making it effective. Christ and the Father are thus both accorded divine functions. The centrality of Jesus Christ in these opening verses is difficult to miss. In this salutation he is mentioned four times, and in the following thanksgiving he appears in every verse.[2]

[2]Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 53–60.

COMMENTARY NOTES

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4–9

In the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary*, Thomas Schreiner shows how Paul's thanksgiving sets the stage for the rest of the book:

4. After the greeting Paul turns to the thanksgiving, which is his usual pattern. Paul regularly voices thanks to God in his prayers for the faith of believers, for their conversion and new life (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9). In particular, he gives thanks for God's grace which took hold of them in Christ Jesus, which probably means 'by means of Christ Jesus' or 'through Christ Jesus'. God's grace, as noted at 1:3, cannot be restricted to his free gift, but also denotes his transforming power. Paul stresses how gracious God was to the Corinthians by emphasizing that the grace received was given to them in Christ. Paul does not specify it here, but we know from other places in the letter that God's grace came to the believers through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by which they received forgiveness of sins (1 Cor. 1:18; 2:2; 5:7; 6:11; 11:23–26; 15:1–4). We know from the rest of the letter that the Corinthians were prone to pride, and Paul wants to cut off from the outset any grounds for self-exaltation.

5. God's grace continues to be celebrated as Paul emphasizes with a passive verb (a form which predominates in these verses) that the Corinthians *have been enriched* in Christ by God. Such enrichment is comprehensive (*in every way*) and is given through Jesus Christ (*in him*). The Corinthians knew they were spiritually rich, but they tended to forget that those riches were theirs in Christ and wanted to congratulate themselves for their spiritual wealth. Paul specifies the nature of their riches as well, focusing on *speech* and *knowledge*. We see a connection with 1 Corinthians 12:8, where two spiritual gifts are named: a 'message of wisdom' (*logos sophias*) and a 'message of knowledge' (*logos gnoseos*).

English readers could miss the connection since in 1:5 the term for *speech, logos*, is translated as 'message' in 1 Corinthians 12:8. The word *knowledge* is the same Greek word in both 1:5 and 12:8. What we see, then, is that thanks are given to God for the spiritual gifts operative in the lives of the Corinthians, even though we know from chapters 12–14 that they were abusing such gifts. Paul reminds them at the outset that God granted gifts to them, and thus the gifts they exercise cannot be attributed to their own virtue or spiritual wisdom. The importance of the 'word' (*logos*) in 1 Corinthians is also evident, since the term appears in discussions of eloquent speech (1:17; 2:1, 4) which stands in contrast to 'the word [*logos*] of the cross' (1:18, ESV). Paul does not deny that the Corinthians enjoy divine power in the exercise of spiritual gifts, but he reminds them that the gifts they have are a product of divine grace.

6. The relationship between verses 5 and 6 is as follows. The enrichment of the Corinthians indicates that the *testimony about Christ* was established among them. The term confirming (ebebaiōthē, lit. 'was confirmed' [CSB]) is a legal term, which is picked up again in verse 8. What Paul means by the testimony about Christ is the gospel, and his point is that the gospel was validated and ratified, and this was evident by the spiritual gifts present among them. The passive of the verb 'was confirmed' (CSB) demonstrates again that God's work among the Corinthians is featured so that all the glory and praise belong to him.

7. The thought of verse 6 is continued. Since the 'testimony about Christ' was confirmed among the Corinthians, it follows that they do not *lack any spiritual gift*. Nevertheless, there is an eschatological proviso in that they await the coming of Jesus Christ on the last day. The word for *gift* (*charisma*) anticipates again the discussion of spiritual gifts in chapters 12–14, where the word is used five times to refer to spiritual gifts (12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31). Despite the abuse of spiritual gifts in the congregation, Paul continues to see their presence as evidence of divine grace. Indeed, Paul emphasizes that no gift is missing in the Corinthian church; God's grace among them has been lavishly dispensed.

Jesus' return is conveyed with the word *apekdechomai* (*eagerly wait*), which always has eschatological dimensions in Paul. Three times in Romans 8 the term refers to the end-time disclosure and redemption of God's children (Rom. 8:19, 23, 25). In Galatians 5:5 believers 'eagerly await … the righteousness for which we hope', while in Philippians 3:20 believers await the return of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:28). The completion of what God has given to believers will be secured when Jesus Christ is unveiled to the world (2 Thess. 1:7; cf. 1 Pet. 1:7, 13; 4:13)—that is, when he comes again.

8. The last two verses zero in on the end and on what God promises to do for believers in the future. God promises to preserve believers blameless until the last day. The verb *keep you firm* (*bebaiosei*) picks up on the verb 'confirming' from verse 6. The one who initially confirmed the Corinthians at the onset of their Christian lives will strengthen them until the final day, until the end. He will ensure that believers are *blameless* (*anenkletous*) on the day of Christ. We find elsewhere that one must be blameless on the last day to avoid final judgment (cf. Col. 1:22; cf. Eph. 5:27; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23). Blamelessness should not be equated with sinlessness but should be understood in terms of perseverance until the end. Those who turn away from Christ and godliness will not receive the final reward, but the Corinthians are promised here that God will preserve them until the end.

It is quite remarkable that Paul speaks of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament repeatedly speaks of 'the day of the Lord', that is, the day of Yahweh. Paul, however, conceives of that same day as the day of Christ (see also Rom. 2:16; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). Relating that day to Christ demonstrates that Jesus Christ has divine status and exercises divine functions.

9. Verse 9 continues the line of thought from verse 8 by affirming God's faithfulness. The one who called the Corinthians into fellowship with Christ will strengthen them to the end. God's faithfulness needs to be explained precisely here, for in Paul it is always tied to the promise to sustain the believers until the end (1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13). The God who called the Corinthians initially into fellowship with Christ will see to it that the initial call is not nullified or cancelled. This makes sense since the word 'calling' in Paul refers to an effective call, a call that creates faith. The thought is very similar to Philippians 1:6, where Paul says that he is 'confident … that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus'. Since God effectively summons people to believe, he will sustain that belief until the end.

What believers are called to is *fellowship* with God's Son, Jesus Christ. The word *fellowship* (*koinonia*) denotes partnership and participation (Phil. 1:5), such as we see in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16). Conversely, believers have no fellowship or mutual relationship with darkness (2 Cor. 6:14). God called the Corinthian believers into partnership with Jesus Christ, who is God's Son and also the Lord. Identifying Jesus as God's Son communicates his close relationship with God. We have seen in previous verses (1:2, 3, 7, 8) the divine identity and actions of Jesus Christ. But it is clear from this verse that the Father and the Son are to be distinguished; Paul was not a modalist, as if the Father and the Son are collapsed into one another. The Father is divine and the Son is divine, and yet there is one God (1 Cor. 8:5–6).

Theology

Several themes stand out in these first two paragraphs. First, Paul is an authoritative apostle, hence his words in this letter are not merely the opinions of a human being but represent the word of God to the Corinthians. Second, the Corinthian believers, with all their faults, are God's assembly, God's congregation. They join other believers in the first century who call upon Jesus Christ as Lord. Third, Paul emphasizes the grace of God which called and equipped the believers at Corinth. The gifts they possess cannot be ascribed to their own wisdom and spirituality, but represent God's kindness in Jesus Christ. The God who called them to faith by his transforming grace will empower them to persevere until the end. Grace operates in the lives of Christians from the first day of belief until the day of Jesus Christ. Fourth, Jesus Christ stands forth in all his glory, power and beauty in these verses. Paul emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the Lord, and in doing so he indicates that Jesus

COMMENTARY NOTES

Christ shares the same identity and stature as Yahweh, the God of Israel. Jesus Christ is fully divine, for like God the Father he grants grace and peace to his people. Furthermore, the day of the Lord is now explained in terms of the day of Christ. Nor are Jesus Christ and the Father identical, since a distinction is made here between the Father and the Son.[3]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Mark A. Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, New American Commentary
Gordon Fee, *1 Corinthians*, New International Commentary of the New Testament (NICNT)
Anthony Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC)
Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentary
Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary
David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, The Bible Speaks Today
William Baker, *1 Corinthians*, Cornerstone Bible Commentary
Paul Ellingwroth and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on 1 Corinthians*, UBSH

[3] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel, vol. 7, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 54–58.