

Sunday, May 3, 2015—I Corinthians 1:1—Paul’s Unique Apostleship

Introduction

- The past two weeks have been taken up with an introduction to the book of I Corinthians. By way of review, we covered the following four points: 1) the geographic, political, economic, religious, and culture life of the city of Corinth, 2) when the book was written during the Acts chronology, 3) the place of I Corinthians in the New Testament cannon, and 4) a general outline of the book’s content.
- With this background information in place, we are ready to begin our exposition of the text of I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 1:1

- **1) Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,**
- *Paul*—as I said in part one of the introduction, two weeks ago, there is no reason to doubt that Paul is the author. Every single one of Paul’s letters begins with his identification of himself as the author.
- According to the book of Acts, Paul’s name was changed from Saul to Paul in conjunction with his first Apostolic journey in Acts 13.
 - Acts 7:58—is the first mention of Saul in the Bible.
 - Acts 8:1-3—Saul consented unto the death of Stephan and “made havock of the church” in Jerusalem.
 - Acts 9:1-4—Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the Jewish kingdom church. He had acquired pagers of the High Priest granting him the authority to seize members of the Little Flock in the synagogues of Damascus.
 - Acts 9:11—saul of Tarsus
 - Acts 22:3
 - Philippians 3:4-6
 - Acts 13:2, 9—this is the first time we encounter the name Paul.

- Between Acts 7:58 when we first meet Saul of Tarsus and Acts 13:9 when we learn of his name change something monumental happened in his life that is mentioned in the next portion of I Cor. 1:1, he was “called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ.”
- *Called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ*—according to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary some of the words associated with the English word “called” include “invited, summoned, and appointed.”
- Galatians 1:13:14—Saul of Tarsus was leading the persecution against the church of God in early Acts, i.e., the Jewish kingdom church that had been established by Peter and the 12.
- I Timothy 1:12-16—despite being the chief of sinners, Saul obtained mercy and was given a ministry by the ascended Christ from heaven’s glory. Paul was to serve as a “pattern” for how God is saving people in the dispensation of grace.
- *Apostle*—comes from the Greek word *apostolos* which means messenger or one sent forth.
 - Matthew 10:2—this is same word used to describe the 12 men chosen by Christ during his earthly ministry.
- Paul is both “called” and sent forth, i.e., he is an “apostle.”
- Acts 9:1-6, 10-16—the Lord tells Ananias the Saul is a “chosen vessel” unto him for the purpose of bearing his name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.
- Acts 26:16-18—offers more details regarding what Saul was told in Acts 9. Christ appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus for the purpose of making him “a minister and a witness.” Verse 17 is also very clear that Saul knew while still on the Damascus road that he was “sent” to the gentiles.
- The Greek word translated “send” in verse 17 is *apostellō*. Note the close relation to the Greek word translated “apostle” in I Cor. 1:1 *apostolos*. Furthermore, the verb translated “I send” in verse 17 is a present indicative which identifies something that is occurring while the speaker is making the statement. In other words, while Paul is still face down in the Arabian sand, the Lord Jesus Christ is sending him to the gentiles.
- I Corinthians 1:1—Paul is both “called” and sent forth, i.e., he is an “apostle” of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ called him and made him an “apostle,” i.e., sent him forth. Thus the expression, “Paul, called *to be* an apostle **of Jesus Christ**.” Paul had nothing to do with it. It was all the work of Christ.
 - Romans 1:1
 - Romans 11:13

- *Through the will of God*—Paul’s calling and apostleship where “through the will of God.”
- The English word “through” carries multiple meanings according to *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* one of which means, “by means of; by the agency of; noting instrumentality.” The instrumentally or agency through which Paul was “called” and made “an apostle” was the will of God. It was by the “means of” God’s will that Paul was dealt with in this manner by Jesus Christ.
- God the Son was serving the will of his Father but interrupting the wild career of Saul of Tarsus, saving him, commissioning him, and sending him forth to the gentiles. In short, it was “through” the instrumentality of the will of God the Father that the Son acted with respect the Paul.
 - Galatians 1:15-16—dealing with Paul in this manner pleased God. Therefore, God the Son acts accordingly with respect to Paul.
- Ephesians 3:1-11—in making Paul an “apostle” Jesus Christ acted in accordance with the eternal purpose of God to reveal and make known the mystery of his will (Eph. 1:9). This revelation pertains to the formation of the church the body which from the beginning of the world was hid in God.
- Paul is the Godhead’s “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15) or conduit through which the revelation of the mystery would be revealed and made known.
- I Timothy 2:4-7—Paul is the Godhead’s “due time” apostle. Paul is the one who testifies regarding all that Christ accomplished at the cross. Paul explains how the cross is the mechanism through which the church the body of Christ could be formed (Eph. 2:16).