

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Chapter 1

Greeting

1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, 2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Kretzmann has a nice summary of the situation at Corinth... (Buls)

Paul had come to this city on his second missionary journey, Acts 18:1, about 50 or 51 A.D. The Lord, through the work of Paul's preaching, had established a Christian congregation in this city, Acts 18:7-11. His converts were mainly Gentiles. The members of the Corinthian congregation were somewhat subject to arrogance and self-conceit, 1:17; 8:1, and had not yet fully thrown off the dominance of sins of sex, 5:1-11; 6:15-18; 11:21. Factions were formed in the congregation which tended to disrupt the entire work of Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:3.4.21.22; 4:1-5; 11:18. As a result, various evils appeared, such as laxity in church discipline, 5:1-5; a growing indifference with regard to the sins of sex, 6:9.13-19; members of the congregation brought suits in the civil courts against one another, 6:1. Christian liberty was abused by participation in feast of idolatry, 8:10.14-33; the celebration of the Communion was desecrated through abuses and uncharitable behavior, 11:17-22; the wonderful gifts of grace were not always used for the edification of the congregation, chapter 12 and 14; some even denied the resurrection of the dead, 15:12. (Buls)

1:1-2 κλητὸς ἀπόστολος ... κλητοῖς ἁγίοις—Derived from the verb καλέω (“to call”), the adjective κλητός (“called”) points to God’s inexpressible grace in calling into his kingdom and service those who are totally unworthy of that call. That is reflected in 15:9–10: “For I am the least of the apostles, one who is unworthy to be called [καλέω] an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am.” The same balance and parallelism between “called apostle” and “called saints” appears in Rom 1:1, 7. Both the apostle and his hearers owe everything they are and have to God’s call. (CC p.25)

1:1 *Paul.* † The Greek custom was to begin a letter with the writer’s name (see note on Ro 1:1). (CSB)

called – Note "called" a passive verbal adjective, is used of Paul, verse 1, and of the Corinthians, verse 2. His conversion and status as an Apostle were only through God's call. Their conversion was only through God's call. (Buls)

With great care Paul has designed every detail of his introduction (1 Cor 1:1–9) to combat the rising factionalism and to restore the Corinthians again to the one fellowship of Jesus Christ. To this end he begins by asserting his authority as Jesus’ designated envoy, who in carrying out his commission had become the spiritual father of every Christian in Corinth (4:15). Thus no one could rightly claim, “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas” (1:12), if this meant he would have nothing to do with Paul. For although Paul saw himself as the least of the apostles (15:8–9), his apostleship was nevertheless beyond dispute. He had seen the risen Lord (9:1)! This Lord had called him as his chosen vessel to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Rom 11:13), including those in the largely Gentile city of Corinth. (CC p. 27)

But Paul knew that he was nothing in himself (2 Cor 12:11). He had no intention of building a personal following and deplored the formation of a “Paul” faction as much as he deplored any other faction (1 Cor 1:12). He saw himself simply as servant and witness of the crucified and risen Lord, Christ Jesus, Israel’s promised Messiah and the Savior of the world (Mt 1:21; Jn 4:42). Now the former persecutor of the church (1 Cor 15:9) had found his great vocation in betrothing others to Christ (2 Cor 11:2); his most important labor was in ensuring that Christ was formed in others (Gal 4:19). His concern to advance the name and cause of Christ emerges clearly in the opening verses of this epistle, where “Christ” occurs ten times in the first ten verses. As he wrote to the Philippians, “For me to live is Christ” (Phil 1:21). (CC p. 27)

It was “not from men nor through a man” that Paul had been commissioned to serve Christ (Gal 1:1), but “through the will of God” (2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; cf. 1 Tim 1:1). Unlike the false apostles who commended themselves and sought to impose their own will on the church (2 Cor 10:18; 11:13), Paul’s ministry bore the divine stamp of approval. (CC p. 27)

apostle of Christ Jesus. Paul uses this title in all his letters (except Philippians, 1,2 Thessalonians and Philemon) to establish his authority as Christ’s messenger—an authority that had been challenged (see ch. 9; 2Co 11). He reinforces his authority by adding “by the will of God,” i.e., by divine initiative. – Paul was not using this to brag. He had some important and sometimes negative things to say and so the establishment of his authority was important. He also was often under attack of “Judizers” who maligned him and his office and thereby advancing their ideas verses the gospel he had preached. By using this phrase he was telling the people that he had not been sent by human individuals or groups but that his authority and message directly from Jesus himself. (CSB)

ἀπόστολος—Rengstorf finds a close parallel to the NT apostleship in the Jewish social institution of the *shaliach* (שְׁלִיחַ). The *shaliach* was the personal representative of another, commissioned with a task which could take him to distant places. According to the rabbis, “the one sent by a man is as the man himself.” Even though the historical link between this Jewish institution and the apostolate may be open to question, the conceptual analogy is illuminating. Jesus assured his apostles, “he who hears you, hears

me” (Lk 10:16). Thus an apostle’s role in representing the one who sends him is similar to that of the modern ambassador or envoy (cf. 2 Cor 5:20). (CC p. 25)

Paul has some weighty problems to deal with in this Epistle. It is necessary for him, therefore, to state that he is an apostle, a called apostle, and that this is thoroughly in keeping with the will of God and of Christ. But there is more. He is joined by Sosthenes, the brother. There has been much discussion as to who this man was. (Buls)

will of God – "Christ Jesus" is subjective genitive. Christ made him an apostle. "Will of God" here is God's gracious will. (Buls)

Bengel: Look at 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; and 2 Timothy 1:1. This 'by the will of God' is the ground of his authority toward the churches and of a lowly and zealous disposition in Paul himself. (Buls)

Lenski: What turned him about and changed his entire character and life was God's will. The volition of God through which he became an apostle emanated from the good and gracious will of God.(Buls)

Kretzmann: The call of Christ and the will of God have worked together in conferring upon him this distinction of being an apostle. (Buls)

By grace, God calls all Christian. Similarly, God chose and appointed Paul to be an apostle. (TLSB)

brother – ἀδελφός—An ἀδελφός is a fellow Christian, a “brother” who addresses God as “Abba,” “Father” (Lk 11:2; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). (CC p. 25)

Sosthenes. Perhaps the synagogue ruler at Corinth who was assaulted by the Greeks (Ac 18:17). If so, he obviously became a Christian—possibly while Paul was preaching at Corinth (Ac 18:18) or during Apollos’s ministry there (Ac 19:1). – He may have served as secretary and wrote down what Paul dictated. Paul then signed the letter (16:21) (CSB)

A Corinthian synagogue ruler (Ac 18:17) beaten by the frustrated crowd at Paul’s trial. (TLSB)

Despite his standing as a divinely called apostle, Paul never operated as a “one-man band.” His ministry was always a team effort, whether he was associated with Barnabas, with Silas and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1), with various “brothers” (Gal 1:2), or, as here, with Sosthenes. This is probably the same Sosthenes who had been serving as synagogue ruler during Paul’s first visit to Corinth (Acts 18:17). Like another synagogue ruler before him (Crispus, Acts 18:8), Sosthenes found Paul’s preaching compelling. But his Christian leanings incurred the hostility of his fellow Jews, who inflicted a beating on him before the proconsul Gallio’s tribunal (Acts 18:17). Thereupon Sosthenes seems to have left the city, making his home in Ephesus. As a former synagogue official, and

moreover one who had been beaten for the sake of Christ, Sosthenes would have been honored by the Corinthian church. (CC pp. 27-28)

Sosthenes probably wrote down most of the letter (i.e., through 1 Cor 16:20) at Paul's direction. But this may have involved more than accepting mechanical dictation. The two men probably talked over the letter's contents and came to a consensus on what should be transmitted. Nevertheless, it is clear that Paul is the primary human author. The ultimate author is God, whose Spirit inspired the writing of the Scriptures (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21), and so Paul's canonical writings are part of the sacred Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16). The exact method and circumstances of the human authors in no way compromises the divine authorship of the Scriptures. (CC p. 28)

1:2 *church of God*. Used only by Paul and only in Ac 20:28, here and 2Co 1:1. Its OT counterpart is the expression "assembly (or community) of the LORD" (see Dt 23:1; see also Nu 16:3; 20:4; 1Ch 28:8). (CSB)

God's people in Christ, especially as they congregate in His name. (TLSB)

ἐκκλησία—In secular Greek ἐκκλησία denoted a popular assembly, like the ἐκκλησία in the theater of Ephesus described in Acts 19:32, 39–40. Normally, however, the NT uses the expression for the "church" of God gathered in the name of Christ Jesus. This NT usage is controlled by the use of ἐκκλησία in the LXX (as a translation of עֲדָתָא) for the gathered people of God (e.g., Deut 9:10). (CC p. 25)

Paul and Sosthenes address "the church of God that is in Corinth" (1:2). The church does not belong to Paul or Apollos or anyone else; it is God's. Paul, Apollos, Sosthenes, and the other church workers all belong to God. They are "God's coworkers," and the Corinthian saints are "God's field, God's building" (3:9; cf. 3:22–23). Thus Paul tries to lift the Corinthians' sights above any limited conceptions of the church as a merely human institution, or an arena for human power plays, to a proper understanding of its character as a divine institution. The apostle of Christ Jesus, called by the will of God, is writing to the church of God, consisting of saints who are also called by God. This is the great vision of the church Paul wants the Corinthians to catch, the vision of God's "one holy catholic and apostolic church" (Nicene Creed), of which the church in Corinth is a manifestation. (CC p. 28)

"Church" is a collective noun, denoting a local congregation. It is modified by "of God." (Buls)

Rienecker: The genitive is possessive and is at once a protest against party spirit, the church is of God, not of any one individual.(Buls)

Lenski: It is best to take the genitive in the broadest sense, since God is the originator, lord, living power, protector, comforter, and ruler of the church. (Buls)

Kretzmann: In addressing the Corinthians, Paul charitably assumes that they are all members of the true congregation of the Lord, of the communion of saints. This is shown by the explanation: to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, to the chosen saints. (Buls)

in Corinth – The address sounds so pious that one would never have guessed Corinth was a hotbed of impurity. It was city that put out the red carpet for people looking for overindulgence of every sort. So vile and so corrupt was the lifestyle of Corinth that the Greek world used the name of this city as a slang term for corruption. It would have seemed like the last place on earth that God would have a church. Called to be holy, God’s people are called to be holy in unholy places. (Where in the World is God?)

On the one hand, the church in Corinth is fully church, with no gifts or graces missing. On the other hand, it is only one manifestation of God’s church among many others, one outcropping, the one that happens to be in Corinth. So the Corinthians should not see themselves as superior to other Christians because of their intellectual attainments or spiritual gifts or unique cultural situation. They are to obey the same apostolic Word that sustains all the churches (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 10:32; 11:16; 14:33). Thus Paul constantly reminds the Corinthians of their place in the larger Christian family (cf. 16:19). After all, the Word of God did not originate with them! (CC pp. 28-29)

Cf. R. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 17:

Paul chides the Corinthian Christians for their prideful presumption that their spiritual freedom liberates them from accountability to others: “[D]id the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (14:36). The answer is, of course, that the word of God has reached many and that the Corinthians must see themselves as part of a much larger movement, subject to the same Lord whose authority governs the church as a whole. They are not spiritual free agents. The church of God that is in Corinth is just one branch of a larger operation. (CC p. 29)

Undoubtedly Paul would also chide those modern churches that operate as if they were completely independent from the rest of the church. The worship life and practice of a congregation should reflect its interdependence and unity with congregations in other places and throughout history. (CC p. 29)

sanctified. † Meaning “made holy,” which is done by (1) being declared holy through faith in Christ’s atoning death on the cross, and (2) being made holy by the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. In spite of the fact that Paul found much in the Corinthian Christians to criticize, he still called them “sanctified”—not because of their conduct, but because of their relationship to Christ. (CSB)

Made holy, specifically in Baptism (6:11). This is God’s work in the life of a sinner, through Christ, not the holiness of the person’s conduct. (TLSB)

ἡγιασμένοις—The literal translation “having been sanctified” reflects the perfect tense, which points to “a present state resulting from a past action.” The passive voice shows that the Corinthians’ sanctification was the work of God. (CC p. 26)

In the LXX, the verb ἁγιάζω is “the usual rendering of the root שׁוּׁר.” The Piel and Hiphil forms of the verb mean “to consecrate,” “to hallow,” “to sanctify” and are especially frequent in Exodus, Leviticus, and Isaiah. Often the word pertains to the prescribed sacrifices, the tabernacle or temple, and liturgical worship. According to the NT, the Christian has been sanctified, made holy, and dedicated to God by Christ’s atoning sacrifice (Heb 2:11; 9:13; 10:10, 14, 29; 13:12). (CC p. 26)

How paradoxical that the one church of God was present in corrupt Corinth! Paul now elaborates on the church’s nature: it consists of those in a state of “having been sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1:2). The sanctification of God’s people does not result from their efforts at self-improvement, their moral accomplishments; it is God’s gift in Christ. As one commentator observes: “Holiness is received, not achieved.” The church received her holiness in Baptism: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (6:11; see also 12:13). On the basis, then, of the sanctification conferred on the church, Paul constantly appeals to the Corinthians: “Become what you are! Live like saints! Flee fornication! Pursue love!” (CC p. 29)

Another epithet follows, “called saints” (1:2), which balances “a called apostle” in 1:1. God’s people in Corinth had become saints, “a holy nation,” by virtue of the divine summons “out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9; cf. Ex 19:5–6). (CC p. 29)

In Paul’s letters the word “saints” always embraces all believers. (CC p. 29)

Cf. Luther’s comments on the phrase “the communion of saints” in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed in the Large Catechism: “Recht deutsch zu reden sollt’ es heißen ‘ein Gemeine der Heiligen’, das ist, eine Gemeine, darin eitel Heiligen sind, oder noch klärlicher ‘ein heilige Gemeine’ ” (*Bekennnisschriften*, 657.49 [LC II 49]). “Speaking in proper German, it should be called ‘a communion of saints,’ that is, a communion in which there are only saints, or even more clearly, ‘a holy communion’ ” (author’s translation). (CC p. 29)

In conversion, for Jesus' sake, God sets the Christian aside for Himself and His service. "In Christ," an adverbial prepositional phrase denoting cause. Only because of what Christ did for them are they sanctified. Note that "holy," a common term in the New Testament for Christians, emphasizes the idea of called and sanctified, they have become such only through the call of the Spirit in the means of grace. (Buls)

Rienecker: 'Called to be holy,' the perfect emphasizes the state or condition resulting from a previous action. (Buls)

Bengel: Those who have been claimed for God. Making a prelude already to the discussion, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their own dignity, lest they enslave themselves to men. (Buls)

Lenski: The idea expressed in 'holy' is separation from everything profane and worldly and devotion to God in Christ Jesus. Paul calls the Corinthians 'they that are sanctified' in spite of the fact that he has much fault to find with them. (Buls)

The remainder of the sentence is in apposition to the words "called to be saints." Paul is not addressing Christians throughout the world at this moment, but is rather stressing the fact that they are in fellowship with all Christians throughout the world. (Buls)

He begins by saying in effect, "You people really have a lot going for you. Christ Jesus has forgiven all your sins, and He is going to help you to do better. This is what it means to be sanctified. This is a marvelous, undeserved gift of God to all Christians, made possible by the suffering and sacrifice of Christ. We are not dogged by our past sins; they are pardoned! We are not helpless in the face of future temptations; we are empowered to resist them and to live more fully according to God's will!" (LL)

John 17:17-19 ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

call upon the name - "Call on the name" reminds one of Acts 2:21; 7:59; 9:14.21; 15:17; 22:16; Romans 10:12.13.14 and 2 Timothy 2:22. We quote just one of these which is a quotation of Joel 3:5: "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" Romans 10:13. In other words "call on the name" is a synonym for "Christian" but reminds us that their faith is active in praying and confessing the name of Jesus. (Buls)

Rienecker: The present tense emphasizes the habitual act which characterizes their life. (Buls)

Bengel: The consideration of the Church universal frees the mind from party bias, and sways it to obedience. It is therefore at one suggested to the Corinthians. (Buls)

"The name of our Lord, Jesus Christ" denotes everything that Jesus Christ is and was and did for us, including His revelation of Himself to us. Note both the divinity and humanity of Jesus in the term "our Lord, Jesus Christ." The prepositional phrase "of all" denotes the universality of the Christian Church. All over the world, night and day, Christians in many lands and of many cultures are calling on the Lord Jesus Christ who revealed Himself to us through the Gospel. (Buls)

The final three words in verse 2 are elliptical for "both their Lord and ours" RSV. JB has an interesting translation "for he is their Lord no less than ours." (Buls)

An expression common in the OT (Ps. 116:13, 17), indicating the response of one called by the Gospel (Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). (TLSB)

σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα—Using the middle voice of the verb, ἐπικαλέομαι τινά means “to appeal to someone.” Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:11). In the LXX the verb is used of the believer’s calling upon the Lord in prayer, praise, and confession. (Ps 98:6 (ET 99:6); Is 43:7; Joel 3:5 (ET 2:32); Zech 13:9) “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (Prov 18:10). The NT applies ἐπικαλέομαι to believers who, prompted by their hearing the Gospel in faith (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως, Gal 3:2, 5; cf. Rom 10:17; Heb 4:2), call on the name of Jesus Christ and thus receive his rich mercy and salvation. Compare Rom 10:12–13 and Luther’s explanation of the Second Commandment: “call upon it [God’s name] in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.” (CC p.26)

The Corinthians are saints “together with all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place” (1 Cor 1:2). Again Paul is reminding the Corinthians: “You are not your own. You belong to a great spiritual fellowship of Christians throughout the world.” To “call on the name of the Lord” (1:2) means to believe in Jesus as Lord, appeal to him in prayer, and praise him in worship (Cf. Ps 99:6; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom 10:12–13). The attentive listener in Corinth would have been able to complete the text Paul is citing from Joel 3:5: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” In no other name was salvation to be found (Acts 4:12; cf. Acts 3:16). No doubt the text had become more precious to Paul since his Baptism, when Ananias admonished him, “Rise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, *calling on his name*” (Acts 22:16). Thus the expression designates a Christian, who calls on the name of Jesus in faith. The Roman statesman Pliny the Younger testified that Christians were characterized by the practice of singing hymns to Christ “as to God.” (CC pp. 29-30)

together with all – σὺν πᾶσιν—It seems more satisfactory to link the phrase “together with” to the immediately preceding word “saints” than to see the letter as addressed both to those in Corinth and to all Christians in every place. 1 Corinthians is not a general epistle; it specifically addresses the Corinthian situation. The Corinthian saints share the calling of “saints” with all other Christians in every place and time. (CC p. 26)

in every place – The phrase “in every place” (1 Cor 1:2) evokes the grandeur of the universal church and its mission in echoes of Malachi: “ ‘From the rising of the sun even to its setting, my name shall be great among the nations; and in every place [LXX: ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ] incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering, for my name shall be great among the nations,’ says the Lord of hosts” (Mal 1:11). (CC p. 30)

of us – The final phrase in 1 Cor 1:2, “both their [Lord] and ours,” reminds the Corinthians again of what they have in common with fellow Christians everywhere. They are not unique; they share the same Lord Jesus Christ as do their brothers and sisters around the world. “The same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing riches on all who call upon him” (Rom 10:12). Thus they have communion with one another, not only by virtue of having the same Lord as their Master, but also in having him as their Savior. (CC p. 30)

1:3 *Grace...peace.* Paul now confers his apostolic blessing of “grace” and “peace” (1 Cor 1:3). These scriptural blessings are not merely wishes. They convey what the words say. The first blessing, “grace,” is the highest gift of God, his free favor and forgiveness to undeserving people. Grace, then, is the source of peace, the state of being reconciled to God (Rom 5:1–11). Since the death of God’s Son brought us forgiveness and reconciliation to God (Rom 5:10), Christians are inspired to live in a forgiving and peaceful manner with one another and, so far as it lies with them (Rom 12:18), with all people. How sorely the strife-torn Corinthian congregation needed this blessing of peace and the conciliatory spirit that flowed from it! Often God’s peace also bears fruit in a sense of inner peace, though this “feeling” is not essential. The objective condition of a peaceful relationship with God through Jesus Christ is paramount in Paul’s concept of “peace” (Rom 5:1–2; Eph 2:14–18). (CC pp. 29-30)

The gifts of grace and peace are conferred both by “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:3). “The Lord Jesus Christ” is accorded equal status with the Father as the bestower of divine gifts. When he is called “Lord,” he is given an ascription belonging to God. (CC p. 31)

This was a common greeting then and is often used from the pulpit. There is nothing common about its meaning. Grace is the source of salvation. That in turn is the only way to achieve true peace. So the order is important and there is a very powerful message expressed.

We become so accustomed to this verse that it loses its force for us. "Grace" is the unmerited kindness of God which caused Him to redeem us through Christ. "Peace" is the objective peace of God which we have because Christ redeemed us. It is ours whether we feel it or not. God is our Father and Jesus Christ is our Lord. The second "and" plainly shows the divinity of Jesus.

By the way, note well the expression "Christ Jesus" or "Jesus Christ" in every verse of our text, with the exception of verse 6 where it is only "Christ." Let's look at every case: in verse 1 Christ called Paul as Apostle; in verse 2 we have been set aside only because of Christ Jesus and He is mentioned again at the end of the verse; in verse 3 the two nouns which summarize Christianity have their origin in Christ; in verse 4 grace is ours only as a gift in Christ; in verse 5 He is referred to by the pronoun, the source of our wealth; in verse 6 His testimony has confirmed us; in verse 7 we are assured that He will come again; verse 8 of our Lord on the last day; and, verse 9 speaks of our fellowship with Jesus Christ. A remarkable repetition throughout our text. (Buls)

Lenski: The order of these two, grace and peace, remains constant, grace always first, peace always second.(Buls)

Kretzmann: The grace and mercy of God in Christ is the greatest gift of the believers; they are assured of the favor of God through the redemption of Jesus. (Buls)

The source of our salvation is always and only in the grace of God in Christ. The result of our salvation is always the peace of God in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 1)

Thanksgiving

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge — 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1:4-6 The three aorist passives are wonderful descriptions of the monergistic salvation story: *tēi dotheisēi* (“that was given,” v 4), *eploutisthēte* (“you were enriched,” v (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:4 thanks. See Ro 1:8. In spite of the conditions which Paul knew to be existing in Corinth, he breaks forth in a hymn of thankfulness because they were believers, they had received grace from God. (CSB)

Faced by the host of problems in the Corinthian congregation, Paul might naturally be expected to begin on a note of complaint. But he takes care not to let the abundant aberrations loom so large in his mind that they sour his relationship with the church and make him lose sight of the far more abundant grace of God (cf. Rom 5:20). As their faithful apostle, pastor, and intercessor, he first assures the Corinthians that he always thanks God for them. (CC p. 34)

Cf. M. Franzmann, *Romans*, 29: “Thanksgiving is always first; thanksgiving, Luther says, is the fire in the censer that makes the incense of our petitions rise with a fine and joyous buoyancy to the throne of God.” Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 30: “This thankfulness on Paul’s part is an example for us all. God loves to add new blessings when past blessings are received and cherished with true gratitude.” Cf. also D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 19: “If we do not give thanks daily for the Christian fellowship in which we have been placed ... then we hinder God from letting our fellowship grow according to the measure and riches which are there for us all in Jesus Christ. ... A pastor should not complain about his congregation.” (CC p. 34)

Despite everything, they remain his constant “boast” (2 Cor 1:14; cf. Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19–20). (CC p. 34)

While it was standard practice in ancient letters and speeches to begin by expressing one’s gratitude to the audience, a practice which could degenerate to hollow flattery (cf. Acts 24:1–3), there is nothing hollow about Paul’s words of thanksgiving to God for the grace he has poured out on the Corinthians. From the fullness of the unspeakable gift of Christ himself (2 Cor 9:15), the congregation had received “grace upon grace” (Jn 1:16). Ever since their Baptism (1 Cor 6:11; 12:13), they had enjoyed a rich and full spiritual life. (CC p. 34)

grace...given – In Romans 1:8 Paul thanks God because their faith is known in all the world. In Philippians 1:3 he thanks God for their fellowship in the Gospel. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 he thanks God because of their labor of faith, toil of love, and endurance of hope. In 2 Thessalonians

1:3 he thanks God because their faith and love are increasing. In Philemon he thanks God because Paul had heard of their faith and love. Only here, in the introduction of 1 Corinthians, does Paul thank God because of the saving grace which God gave them in Christ. That is truly remarkable, because of all of Paul's congregations, so far as we know, the Corinthians gave him the hardest time. The point we are making is that the Apostle really practiced 1 Corinthians 13, the great chapter on love. The more wayward the hearers, the more grateful the preacher because of God's grace. (Buls)

Lenski: The passives show that this is praise for what God has wrought, not for anything the Corinthians have done. This fact is quite significant for an understanding of the body of the letter, which has much to criticize in regard to the Corinthians. Yet Paul is not writing in an ironical manner (hypocritical) when he uses these passive verbs. A little personal touch is added by inserting 'my' before 'God.' Paul always remembers with a grateful heart the many gifts God has already granted to his people. 'Grace' is itself the highest and most comprehensive of God's undeserved gifts and here embraces all that God has so freely bestowed on the Corinthians.(Buls)

Kretzmann: The injury of the ungrateful Corinthians was great, but their ingratitude did not consume Paul's gratitude. Paul's manner of dealing in this instance is, incidently, a fine example of love's believing in all things; for he was sure that the abuses that were found in the Corinthian congregation did not represent their real spiritual selves, and that his admonition would readily be heeded. In spite of their many weaknesses, they were yet believers. (Buls)

1:5 *in every way* – ἐν αὐτῷ—KJV and NKJV translate “by him.” However, “in him” is to be preferred because the phrase is in apposition to “in Christ Jesus” in the previous verse. (CC p. 32)

have been enriched – This is in the passive and therefore says that it is not something that came from them. They are enriched in a spiritual way in that they have been well taught in the Word and received the right understanding. Moreover, their Christian knowledge has already borne good fruits. (Stoekhardt)

Their rich endowment in “speech” included the gift of tongues and its interpretation, prophecy and the weighing of prophecy, teaching, and the composing of hymns (12:10, 28–30; 14:26). Following the pattern of their teacher, Apollos, an “eloquent” man (ἀνὴρ λόγιος, Acts 18:24), the Corinthians had been enriched in all “eloquence, speech” (λόγῳ, 1 Cor 1:5). (CC pp. 34-35)

This gift of speech flowed from the “knowledge” that was in their hearts. Like “speech,” “knowledge” is a comprehensive word. It includes the Corinthians’ Spirit-given understanding of the wisdom of the cross, their appreciation of all God’s gifts, their ability to exercise spiritual judgment, and the specific gift of prophetic knowledge (2:6–16; 13:2; 14:6). These two gifts—the utterance of the mouth and the knowledge of the heart—find an echo in the two parts of Rom 10:9: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him for the dead, you will be saved.” (CC p. 35)

For the congregation’s outstanding endowment with these gifts Paul thanks God. Some commentators have detected a trace of irony in his thanksgiving, for it was precisely these gifts of speech (especially the gift of tongues) and of knowledge which had led many Corinthians to become puffed up. But there can be little doubt that Paul’s thanksgiving is thoroughly genuine. The gifts (χαρίσματα, 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31) in themselves were signs of God’s rich gift of grace (χάρισμα, 1:7). The problems had arisen because some were letting their gifts “go to their heads,” as though they had acquired them through their own efforts or brilliance. Later Paul would remind them, “What do you have that you have not received?” (4:7). (CC p. 35)

Thus in praising God for the Corinthians' giftedness "in all speech and all knowledge" (1:5), Paul is not only giving God his due but also signaling to the Corinthians that it is to these two gifts that he will be paying most attention. *Throughout the epistle everything he says will be aimed at correcting distortions and developing the right understanding of Christian speech and knowledge.* (CC p. 35)

Usually Paul speaks of God's riches (cf Phil. 4:19), but here God causes His people to share in His wealth of "all speech and all knowledge." (TLSB)

ebēbaiōthē ("was confirmed," v 6). This is "the grace (*charis*) of God" (vv 3–4), God acting in his unprompted goodness for his people. God causes and bestows this spiritual blessing. This is why the apostle can say to the Corinthians, "In every way you were enriched" in Christ (v 5b), for "you are not lacking in any spiritual gift" (v 7a; see below). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

"In every way" means "in every respect" and should not be watered down. "You have been enriched" implies that they were poor beggars, spiritually, before they came to faith in Christ. "In Him" refers to Christ and denotes the meritorious cause. This phrase reminds us of the Christmas verse which says: "We are rich for He was poor etc." Note that this verse contains three "in" phrases, all adverbial. The first is locative and denotes the circumstances of their lives. The second is adverbial causal and the third is locative, denoting their inward and outward state and actions.(Buls)

Rienecker: Speech, utterance, and knowledge. The first is the outward expression and the second the inward conviction. (Buls)

Bengel: Utterance follows knowledge, and the latter is known by the former. The Corinthians admired spiritual gifts; therefore, by mentioning their gifts, he conciliates them, and prepares a way for reproof. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Utterance' must refer to any and every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ, namely the practical and theoretical, devotional and apologetic, pastoral instruction and admonition, and public preaching and teaching. This, of course, includes also the knowledge necessary for such utterance whenever teaching is engaged. The 'knowledge' here added to 'utterance' is the result of the latter. (Buls)

Luther: That is what St Paul calls 'being rich' first 'in all doctrine or wisdom' which is the high spiritual understanding of the word which concerns eternal life, that is, the comfort of faith in Christ; also of calling upon Him and praying. And 'in all understanding' that is, correct knowledge and distinction of the entire external physical life and being on earth. (Buls)

speech and all knowledge. Gifts of the Spirit (see 12:8; also 2Co 8:7). (CSB)

This is not restricted to some specific type of speaking as "in tongues." This refers to every form of expressing the saving truth of Christ. Where all forms of teaching and admonition manifest themselves, there the natural result will be that all forms of knowledge will spread in the congregation and thus likewise abound. (Lenski)

The Corinthians appeared to value eloquence and wisdom above anything else. Many of them paid good money to traveling teachers who trained them to become eloquent and persuasive speakers. (PBC)

Because the Gospel is proclaimed among them, they have everything they need to continue strong in their faith and to keep improving in their Christian life. (LL)

Jeremiah 9:24 “but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the LORD.”

1:6 *even* – καθώς—BAGD, s.v. καθώς, 3, understands this conjunction in a causal sense. Cf. NIV: “because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you” (cf. NEB). But more likely the term should be taken in its normal sense “just as,” “inasmuch as.” The gifts of speech and knowledge are evidence that “the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you.” (CC p. 32)

testimony about Christ was confirmed among you – Their knowledge has shown itself in the free and effective witness for Christ. Their congregation is a demonstration of the Gospel’s power. (Stoeckhardt)

Preaching gives witness to Christ, and the Corinthians’ faithful receiving of it demonstrates the Spirit’s confirmation of the message. (TLSB)

Their rich spiritual gifts served as evidence that the apostolic testimony to Christ had created Christian faith in the hearers. Through the Holy Spirit’s testimony it had been brought home to their deepest convictions that the Gospel message was true, leading to these rich results. (CC p. 35)

Rienecker: 'Just as, inasmuch as, because.' Produces not mere parallel but rather an explanation of what precedes. (Buls)

Bengel: Christ is not only the object but also the author of this testimony. By Himself confirmed and by the accompanying gifts and miracles, 12:3; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22; Galatians 3:2,5; Ephesians 4:7,8; Hebrews 2:4. That the Corinthians needed nothing is proved by the fact that the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them. (Buls)

That is a very important remark. The charismatics claim that true Christians need more than faith in the Gospel. That is simply anti-Scriptural. (Buls)

Lenski: 'In you' means: in your hearts by an increase of faith. Instead of writing 'the Gospel' Paul says: 'the testimony of Christ' was confirmed in you. The testimony which Christ himself made while here on earth, subjective genitive. The verb is again passive, pointing to God as the agent. 'Giving' is the broadest of the three verbs, verse 4; 'making rich' in verse 5 is more specific; 'confirming' in verse 6 narrows the idea down still more and refers it to the very hearts of the Corinthians. (Buls)

to marturion tou Christou, “the testimony about Christ.” How should the genitive be translated? Some, such as the ESV, render it “about”; others suggest “of” or “to.” Gregory Lockwood puts it this way: “The apostolic testimony to Christ has created Christian faith in the hearers” (*1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000], 35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

A Christian has a certainty that no unbeliever can ever know. This certainty affects all he knows and everything he says. (PBC)

confirmed. Paul's preaching about Christ had been accepted by the Corinthians, and they had proved it to be true. (CSB)

1:7 *not lacking* – μή ὑστερεῖσθαι—Cf. BAGD, s.v. ὑστερέω, 2: “pass[ive] *lack, be lacking, go without, come short of.*” (Cf. Rom 3:23; 1 Cor 8:8; 12:24; 2 Cor 11:9; Phil 4:12; Heb 11:37) (CC p. 32)

1 Cor 1:7 is a result clause, balancing the positive statement of 1:5 (“in everything you were enriched in him”) with its double-negative corollary (“thus you are not lacking in any gift of grace”). Paul is probably not comparing the Corinthians with other Christians (“you are not lacking in comparison with others”), but simply saying they are not at all deficient. They should not let anyone make them feel inadequate because of their lack of a rhetorical education; the χαρίσματα they had received were sufficient. (CC pp. 35-36)

any spiritual gift. Probably refers to the spiritual gifts of chs. 12–14. According to those chapters, a spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit enabling one to minister to the needs of Christ's body, the church (see 12:7–11; 14:3, 12, 17). The Greek word used here stresses that it is a gift of grace. (CSB)

These blessings originate in the Spirit of God. Our redemption is the chief gift (Rom. 5:15) and consequently the means God has given to equip His Church to minister to one another with that gift. (TLSB)

χαρίσματι—RSV, NRSV, and NIV translate χάρισμα as “spiritual gift,” KJV and NKJV simply as “gift.” A cognate of χάρις (“grace”), the word means “gift of grace” or “gracious gift.” Paul uses it (1) of the whole gift of salvation (Rom 5:15; 6:23) and (2) of specific gifts and mercies given to Christian people. Those specific gifts could be of a miraculous nature like prophecy, tongues, or healing (1 Corinthians 12–14), or less spectacular gifts like an encouraging message (Rom 1:11), a special blessing or favor (2 Cor 1:11), the gift necessary for the work of the pastoral ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), or even the grace to live as a celibate or as a married person (1 Cor 7:7). (CC pp. 32-33)

This is the first time Paul has used the word χάρισμα (“gracious gift, gift of grace,” 1:7). While the Corinthians themselves seem to have preferred the word πνευματικά (“spiritual gifts,” 12:1), Paul prefers χάρισμα as a reminder that all they have is by grace. (CC p. 36)

"Therefore" with the infinitive can denote either contemplated, anticipated, result or actual result. the difference must be determined contextually. Here is most definitely denotes actual result. TEV is good: "The message about Christ has become so firmly fixed in you, that you have not failed to receive a single blessing." And JB: "The witness to Christ has indeed been strong among you so that you will not be without any of the gifts of the Spirit." RSV, NIV, NEB, AAT, NKJV all agree in this. NEB reads: "There is indeed no single gift you lack." That is SO important to note when dealing with the charismatics. Furthermore, note the double negative which makes the negative more emphatic. (Buls)

Rienecker: 'Spiritual gifts' that which was given out of grace, empowerments given to the church from God or from the risen Lord. (Buls)

Lenski: Since Paul is here speaking in general terms, 'no gift' cannot refer to the special charismatic gifts of the early church, chapters 12 and 14, but must point to the general gracious gifts of God with which true believers are always duly endowed, the spiritual blessings of Christianity in general. A congregation does not come behind or fall short when it is waiting for the Lord's revelation. Whoever is equipped to look forward aright to that glorious revelation does not 'come behind in any gracious gift.' (Buls)

This is well said. Charismatic gifts never cause a person to look forward to the last day. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The Christians of Corinth did not lack, did not fall behind in, any gift of grace which was needed for edification, by which they were qualified to labor for the Lord by instruction, by exhortation, by rule, by service. No congregation of the early days exceeded that of Corinth in the variety of its endowments and the satisfaction felt in them, 12:7-11. The believers in that heathen city were in possession of such rich endowments while they eagerly awaited the coming, the final revelation, of possession of such rich endowments while they eagerly awaited the coming, the final revelation, of the Lord Jesus Christ. They received the rich endowment of the gifts of grace and used them for the benefit of the work for Christ, but at the same time their hearts were turned in eager anticipation to their final redemption, Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12. (Buls)

Charismati, “spiritual gift[s].” This is a key word in this letter—although Paul uses *pneumatika* in 12:1, perhaps reflecting that the Corinthians themselves preferred this term. It means “gift of grace”—but is often (incorrectly in this writer’s opinion) translated “spiritual gift”—and is used to express gifts of a miraculous nature or those which are less spectacular (1 Cor 12–14), or “a special blessing or favor (2 Cor 1:11), [or] gift necessary for the work of the pastoral ministry (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), or even the grace to live as a celibate or as a married person (1 Cor 7:7)” (Lockwood, 32–33). All speech (*en panti logōi*) that flows from all knowledge (*pasēi gnōsei*) are the particular gifts the Corinthians have received (v 5). Unfortunately, these very gifts led many of this congregation to be puffed up (1 Cor 8:1). The apostle will address them at length later in his letter. Lockwood notes: The Corinthians have fallen “into a self-centered intoxication” with their spiritual gifts rather than appreciating that these gifts are “to serve a church which is still on the way.” Their failing has impacted their eager anticipation of Christ’s final coming (36). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

The Corinthians are not lacking any spiritual gift. The double negative (*mē . . . mēdeni charismati*) asserts that they have all the Holy Spirit intended for them. Note also the simple but profound comment in *The Lutheran Study Bible* on this verse: “Our redemption is the chief [spiritual] gift” (1947). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

as you wait - apekdechomenou, “eager longing,” specifically for *tēn apokalupsin*, “the revealing.” “The verb describes the eager longing of the creation and Christians for Christ’s return (see also Rom 8:19, 23, 25; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20)” (Lockwood, 33). Fritz Rienecker adds concerning this present middle participle: “The double preposition in compound implies a degree of earnestness and intensity of expectation. . . . The present tense emphasizes the continuous action” (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, vol 2 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 40). A possible translation is “as you keep on expectantly waiting.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

ὁμᾶς . . . ἀπεκδεχομένων—The verb ἀπεκδέχομαι describes the eager longing of the creation and Christians for Christ’s return (see also Rom 8:19, 23, 25; Gal 5:5; Phil 3:20). (CC p. 33)

At the same time, Paul gently reminds them not to let their giftedness lull them into complacency. They must not become so focused on present blessings that they lose sight of their Christian hope. After all, their gifts are gifts of grace to weak, struggling sinners, who still live under the cross and await the final glory. They should still be filled with longing for “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:7). Their gifts are to serve a church which is still on the way. But the Corinthians are in danger of falling into a self-centered intoxication with their gifts, so that later Paul must reproach them: “Already you are satiated! Already you have begun to be rich! Without us you have begun your reign!” (4:8). As a result, not only are they no longer eagerly anticipating the Lord’s final coming (Cf. Lk 17:30; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Pet 1:7,13; 4:13), but their hope for the final resurrection of their bodies has also faded (1 Corinthians 15). They need a reminder that the Spirit and all his gifts are God’s down payment, his guarantee of a much greater inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). (CC p. 36)

They need to join Paul in praying the prayer with which he closes the epistle, *μαράνα θά* (“Our Lord, come!” 1 Cor 16:22). (CC p. 36)

Rienecker: 'To wait eagerly but patiently for something.' The double preposition in compound implies a degree of earnestness and intensity of expectation. The present tense emphasizes the continuous action and the participle expresses an attendance circumstance. (Buls)

Look at its uses at Romans 8:19.23.25; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 3:20. Except for the last reference it always denotes the earnest longing of the Christian for everlasting life, the appearance of Jesus. (Buls)

Bengel: The test of the true or false Christian is his waiting for, or dreading, the revelation of Christ. (Buls)

revealing - tēn apokalupsin, “the revealing.” Not the “appearing” (*parousia*), but the unveiling of Christ visibly. See also 2 Pet 3 (Epistle for Advent 2, Series B) including the language of the Day of the Lord bringing “exposure” (v 10), not just of the reigning Christ, but of the falsity of fallen creation by the re-creation of new heavens and the new earth. Three terms give emphasis to this focus: *apokalupsin* is followed by *eōs telous* (“to the end”) in v 8a and by *tēi hēmerai tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou* (“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”) in v 8b. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:8 *who*. God the Father. (CSB)

sustain you – The Lord will preserve them (and us) in the faith. They need not be distressed, thinking of their own weakness, but rather should look to the Lord. (Stoeckhardt)

The gift of Christ’s holiness made the saints holy; therefore, they will be kept “guiltless” in His innocence until His return. (TLSB)

Thus on the day when all must appear before Christ’s judgment seat (2 Cor 5:10), the Corinthians could be assured that they would be “holy, pure, and blameless” before him (Col 1:22). That day and the assessment of his life which would take place on that day were for Paul far weightier matters than any assessment of his ministry by a “human day” (1 Cor 4:3). For the Corinthians also, preoccupied as they were with the present age and its gifts, it was essential to keep the Last Day continually before their eyes. Our death may transpire before Jesus’ final coming, but the resurrection of the body and eternal life in the new creation will commence only then, at his

return. We need a proper “apocalyptic” perspective—a sense that our brief lives are always lived in the shadow of eternity. Then we will not become too myopically engrossed in the joys, gifts, and cares of this world. “For,” as Paul reminds us in 7:29–31, “the form of this world is passing away.” So we live here as resident aliens, longing for our true home in heaven, “from which we await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). (CC pp. 36-37)

When Paul says that God will keep them “blameless” (1 Cor 1:8), he does not mean, of course, that the last advent will find them morally perfect. His assurance is that no one will be able to bring a charge against them (Rom 8:33), for Christ Jesus has become their righteousness (1 Cor 1:30). (CC p. 37)

Moreover, Paul is confident that God will keep them from falling in times of temptation (10:13; 2 Cor 1:10). (CC p. 37)

Cf. FC SD XI 32: “Holy Scripture also assures us that God who has called us will be so faithful that after ‘he has begun the good work in us’ he will also continue it to the end and complete it, if we ourselves do not turn away from him but ‘hold fast until the end the substance which has been begun’ in us. For such constancy he has promised his grace (I Cor. 1:8; Phil. 1:6ff.; II Pet. 3:9; Heb. 3:14).” (CC p. 37)

the end. Of the age, when Christ comes again. (CSB)

guiltless – The blamelessness of Christian does not consist in any merits on their part, but in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them by faith. (Kretzmann)

ἀνεγκλήτους—ἀνέγκλητος in the NT bears two meanings: (1) In a civil sense: “blameless” “(in the sense of civil ethics),” that is, having the reputation of a good citizen (1 Tim 3:10; Titus 1:6–7). (2) In a religious sense:

On the basis of the justification effected by the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians are spotless and irreproachable before God. No accusation can be brought against them. This will be disclosed at the last judgment. In this declaration we have a clear expression of the power of grace creating a wholly new situation. How the ἀνέγκλητος is to be understood is made perfectly plain by the question of R[om]. 8:33f.: τίς ἐγκαλέσει κατὰ ἐκλεκτῶν θεοῦ. ... The presupposition according to 1 C[or]. 1:8 is the help of God. (CC p. 33)

Note that the previous verse ends with a semi-colon which virtually makes verse 8 an independent clause. Now Christ Himself is the subject and the verb is in the future, telling us that He will establish the hearers. On the adjective "blameless" look at Colossians 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:10; Titus 1:6.7. It never means "sinless." It means that no one can condemn the individual of whom it is said. The blood of Jesus Christ makes us blameless. "The day" for the individual means either at the time of death or on the last day, which every comes first. But the temporal phrase beginning with "in" makes it abundantly clear that on the last day the Lord Jesus will declare the individual believer blameless. Look at Romans 8:1. (Buls)

Bengel: 'In the day' construed with 'blameless,' 1 Thessalonians 5:23. After that day there is no danger, Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6. Now there are our own days, in which we work, days of enemies, by whom we are tried; then shall be the day of Christ and his glory in the saints. (Buls)

Lenski: The future tense 'shall confirm you' has the force of divine promise. The verb 'blameless' is forensic. (Buls)

Correct. We are justified, forgiven, reconciled to God, made blameless forensically because of the blood of Jesus Christ. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This blamelessness consists in the fact that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them by faith, Philippians 3:9. (Buls)

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. XI, Election, Tappert 621,32: In the same vein Holy Scripture also assures us that God who has called us will be so faithful that after 'he has begun the good work in us' he will also continue it to the end and complete it, if we ourselves do not turn away from him but 'hold fast until the end of the substance which has been begun' in us. for such constancy he has promised his grace, 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6ff; 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 3:14. (Buls)

anengklētous, “guiltless.” The adjective can be used in the civil sense (in civil ethics) or in a spiritual/religious sense. “On the basis of the justification effected by the death and resurrection of Christ, Christians are spotless and irreproachable before God. No accusation can be brought against them (see Rom 8:33). . . . In this declaration we have a clear expression of the power of grace creating a wholly new situation” (Walter Grundmann, *TDNT*, 1:357). Other judicial renderings of *anengklētous* might be “not subject to accusation” or “not able to be indicted.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

We are not guiltless/blameless so that we are ready for “the Day.” We are ready for (we are “sustained” to) the end, the Day, the revealing, because we are guiltless in Christ. And it should also be noted—and declared—that after the Day, there is no danger to those redeemed and rescued by Jesus Christ. (See also 2 Pet 3:14b, the final verse in next Sunday’s Epistle.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. When he returns (v. 7; Php 1:6). (CSB)

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν—The OT expression יְהוָה יוֹם, “the day of the Lord” (e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:1–2; Amos 5:18–20), lies in the background. (CC p. 33)

Telous, “end,” and *tēi hēmerai tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou*, “day of the our Lord Jesus Christ.” The apocalypse of Christ (v 7a) is the end; it is the Day of the Lord. These expressions—written with Hebraic parallelism—are filled with Advent implications. Paul will write later in this letter: “The present form of this world is passing away” (7:31b). It will pass away because of God’s action. (See the notes on 2 Pet 3:8–14 prepared for the Second Sunday in Advent’s proclamation.) The Confessions include 1 Cor 1:8 (and 2 Pet 3:9 for Advent 2) as references. See Robert Kolb, Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 646:32. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

1:9 fellowship – εἰς κοινωνίαν—The word κοινωνία (“communion”) has a broad semantic range, including “a society, a fellowship, an association, the right of participation,” “generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism” (BAGD, s.v. κοινωνία, 2), “sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity,” even “gift, contribution” (BAGD, s.v. κοινωνία, 3). Basically the words in the κοινόν group signify “to share with someone in something.” In 1 Corinthians Paul uses the κοινόν words for the participation of the believer in Christ (1:9), in the blessings of the Gospel of Christ (9:23), and in the body and blood of Christ (10:16). The term is packed with theological significance in a context where the congregation was threatening to fly apart, forgetting the precious κοινωνία in Christ on which it had been constituted. (CC pp. 33-34)

English versions commonly translate κοινωνία as “fellowship” (RSV, NRSV, KJV, NKJV, NIV, GNB). The rendering “communion” may be freer of secular associations, and it better preserves the link with the Holy Communion text in 10:16. (CC p.34)

As a sign that the one who had called them would see his good work through to the end (cf. Phil 1:6), Paul points to the blessed fellowship the Corinthians already enjoyed in Christ. This fellowship (κοινωνία, “communion”) involved far more than some kind of vague relationship with Christ. It meant, rather, an actual participation in him, a union with him through faith and Baptism into his body, so that their bodies were now in a mysterious way members of his body (6:15; 12:13). This deep communion was constantly nourished by the Gospel and Christ’s true body and blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion (9:23; 10:16). (CC p. 37)

G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 45, and H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 29, n. 47, doubt that Paul is alluding to the Lord’s Supper here in 1:9, but they advance no solid reasons for eliminating this aspect from the picture. As the only other occurrence of κοινωνία in the letter is in 10:16, where it clearly refers to communion in Holy Communion, it seems likely Paul also has this aspect in mind in 1:9. Cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 35: “In this life our communion with Christ is mediated ... by Word and sacrament, ... by which he makes his abode with us and dwells in us. There is no fellowship of Christ with us apart from his Word and sacrament.” (CC pp. 37-38)

Communion with Christ is in turn the basis for communion among Christians (Acts 2:42; 1 Jn 1:3). In drawing people into communion with his Son as members of his body, God draws them into a close and deep relationship with one another. From the outset Paul is reminding the Corinthians that their “communion” (κοινωνία, 1 Cor 1:9) in Christ rules out all factionalism and individualism (1:10–11). Paul would have no time for the modern attitude that “my Christianity is something between me and my God.” (CC p. 38)

Note both natures of Christ in the words “of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.” There is no stronger human bond than that which exists between the God-man, Jesus Christ, and the believer. It is from eternity, brought to pass in time, and will last forever. Nothing can compare with it among mere men. (Buls)

Eis koinōnian, “into fellowship.” This is more than a vague relationship with Jesus. (Witness the fuzzy spiritual language in many parts of modern Christendom.) This fellowship is grounded in the waters of Baptism, by which an isolated individual becomes part of the Body (1 Cor 6:15; 12:13). This union, this communion, this participation with Christ—and with other believers!—is nourished in the Gospel of Christ’s body and blood in his Supper (9:23; 10:16). The First Letter to the Corinthians deals with many distortions, implications, and applications of this divine gift. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Vv 3–9: Finally, we note the repetition of “Jesus Christ” throughout the appointed Epistle. Our Lord’s name occurs six times in these seven verses, each with different words preceding it. In light of the naming of the Messiah in prophetic Word and in the Gospel accounts (Mt 1; Lk 1–2), careful attention could (should!) be given to each phrase. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

God ... is faithful. He may be trusted to do what he has promised (1Th 5:24), namely, to keep believers “strong to the end” (v. 8). (CSB)

πιστὸς ὁ θεός—Paul places the adjective πιστός (“faithful”) first for emphasis (“faithful is God”), as he does in 1 Cor 10:13. God’s faithfulness in keeping his promises is assumed throughout the Scriptures. (CC p. 33)

He can assure them that God will sustain them to the end because he knows “God is faithful” (1 Cor 1:9). God’s faithfulness is one of his outstanding attributes, according to the Scriptures. Whereas every human being has an innate tendency toward lying and deception (Rom 3:4; cf. Ps 116:11), God “never lies” (Titus 1:2). He is “the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love” (Deut 7:9) and can be counted on to say “yes” and “amen” to all his promises (2 Cor 1:18–20). (Cf. 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Thess 5:24; 2 Thess 3:3) Thus he is worthy of the Christian’s total confidence. (CC p. 37)

Even when we are faithless (2 Tim. 2:13), God will sustain those who are “called.” (TLSB)

In Greek "faithful" is a predicate adjective placed forward for the sake of emphasis. Look at 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Hebrews 10:23; 11:11; 1 John 1:9, where you have the same phenomenon. In addition to these references see 2 Timothy 2:13; Revelation 1:5; and Deuteronomy 7:9. When "faith" is applied to God it means He keeps His promises. (Buls)

Bengel: He performs what He has promised. (Buls)

Lenski: The passive verb itself contains the idea that God is the agent. His faithfulness reaches back to the very first moment of our saving contact with him. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The final, the deepest ground of Paul's hope for the salvation of the Corinthian Christians is the fidelity of God: Faithful is God, through whom you are chosen to the fellowship of His son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Our election to the fellowship of His son, Jesus Christ, the fact that we have been brought to faith by Him and have thus been united with Him in that wonderful spiritual union of members in His body, is His earnest-money to us that our salvation is secure in His hands. (Buls)

Luther: What Christ has begun in you, and what He has already given you, in that He will surely keep you to the end and into eternity, if only you do not willfully fall from it and cast it from you. For His Word and promise, given you, and His work, which he performs in you, is not changeable like men's word and work, but sure, certain, and divinely immovable truth. Since, then, you have such a divine call, take comfort in it and rely upon it firmly. (Buls)

pistos ho theos, “faithful is God.” Note the significant word order. “Faithful” is given pride of place. All contemporary English translations reverse the words: “God is faithful.” (And some are quite weak, e.g. “God faithfully keeps his promises” [God’s Word to the Nations] and “God can be trusted” [Contemporary English Version], even though these are true statements of God’s character.) No popular translation puts “faithful” first in this verse. *Pistos* is also an expressive bookend to the *charis*, which is the initial word of the text (v 3a). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

Beck says, “You can depend on God, who called you.” The Good News says, “God is to be trusted.” The adjective “pistos” is placed emphatically forward and means trustworthy, reliable. If we were left to depend on ourselves we should surely be lost, but we can trust God completely. (Lenski)

2 Timothy 2:13 “if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.”

Hebrews 11:11 “By faith Abraham, even though he was past age—and Sarah herself was barren—was enabled to become a father because he^a considered him faithful who had made the promise..”

called – Kretzmann sees election in this verse. That is reminiscent of the Predestinarian Controversy between the Ohio and Missouri Synods one hundred (sic) years ago. On the word “called” look at Romans 8:30. Kretzmann is surely right. We end with a well-known quote from Luther’s Large Catechism, the Creed, Tappert 417, 51-53. (Buls)

This is the sum and substance of this phrase (communion of saints): I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism. Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner, 1 Corinthians 1:9, in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God’s Word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community of Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit. (Buls)

1:4–9 Paul highlights the strengths of the congregation, strengths God extends to all believers by His grace. We rejoice in our relationship to God: He has called us and sanctified us, and He will sustain us. • We hear Your call, heavenly Father, in the Gospel of Your Son. Keep us to the end. Amen. (TLSB)

Divisions in the Church

10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. 12 What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.” 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1:10 *I appeal to you* – παρακαλέω ... διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ—Cf. BAGD, s.v. παρακαλέω, 2: “appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage.” The verb can also mean to “comfort” or “cheer up.” Paul will use this verb later in 4:13, 16; 14:31; 16:12, 15, where its meaning ranges from “to answer in a kind manner” even when the Christian is persecuted (4:13),

to when Paul “strongly urged” the unwilling Apollos to travel to Corinth (16:12). Regarding the use of *διὰ* with the genitive. Paul used a similar construction in the preceding verse, *δι’ οὗ* in 1:9, to say that the Corinthians had been called into communion and unity by God. (CC p. 39)

Just as Isaiah’s words of comfort are based on God’s new act of salvation (“Comfort, comfort my people ... her iniquity is pardoned,” Is 40:1–2), so Paul’s appeal to the saints is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As an apostle he could make his weight felt and issue commands (as he will do in, for example, 1 Cor 4:16; 5:7; 6:18; 7:12–13; 10:14; 11:28; 14:37; 16:1). But he prefers the pastoral approach of encouraging his flock in keeping with his role as their father in the faith (1 Cor 4:15; see also 1 Thess 2:7; Philemon 8–9). This Gospel-based comfort, now recorded in the Scriptures for subsequent generations of Christians, is filled with the power of the Spirit to build up the church. The edification or upbuilding of the church will be a prominent theme of the epistle. (CC p. 39)

brothers. In Christ believers have a unity similar to that of blood brothers and sisters. Paul is referring to both men and women (see 16:20; Ro 16:3, 6–7, 12–13, 15). (CSB)

But apart from the linguistic convention of the time, there seems to be a further reason for Paul’s use of *ἀδελφοί* rather than “brothers and sisters.” Paul describes to the Galatians how God sent his Son (*υἱός*) to redeem us so that all Christians might receive adoption as sons (*υιοθεσία*), and God also sent “the Spirit of his Son” into our hearts, enabling us to cry “Abba, Father.” Thus, he continues, every Christian is no longer a slave but a son and heir (Gal 4:4–7; cf. Rom 8:14, 19). (CC p. 40)

In the ancient Near East, generally sons, and not daughters, were the heirs, though there were a couple of exceptions in the OT (Num 27:1–11; Job 42:13–15). (CC p. 40)

With the Spirit of God’s Son in our hearts, all Christians are being “conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:29–30). Thus according to NT terminology, all Christians, whether men, women, or children, are “brothers” by virtue of their common sonship in Christ, the Son. (CC p. 40)

name of our Lord Jesus Christ – Paul turns now to address the first big issue of the epistle: the need to restore the church’s unity. This topic will be his chief concern throughout the first four chapters (1:10–4:21). While he can sometimes be stern (4:21!), the chief basis of his appeal is the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, whose name the Corinthians call upon (1:2). Their faith and fellowship in Christ, he points out, have clear implications for their unity. (CC p. 42)

The Corinthians had been called into communion with Christ (1:9). Paul now urges them to maintain that unity. Calling them “brothers,” a term he will use thirty-nine times in the epistle, his appeal comes to them “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:10), the one name that should completely overshadow any party names and loyalties. After all, this was the name into which they had been baptized. Paul is here, no doubt, anticipating the baptismal argument in 1:13. The Corinthians belong to Christ and only to Christ, for they have been baptized in his name, not the name of Paul or anyone else. (CC pp. 42–43)

It had become apparent that the Corinthians, proud of their intellectual ability, delighted in debating with one another, taking a variety of positions on issues like sexuality and marriage, food laws, spiritual gifts, and the role of women in worship. Paul’s plea for unity does not mean he envisaged a colorless uniformity, with no room for individual insights and accents. On the

other hand, neither would he have condoned the principle of “reconciled diversity,” the pluralism in doctrine and practice endorsed by the modern ecumenical movement. That would not be compatible with saying the same thing. Paul is pleading for a “great consensus” in the church, so that the congregation will glorify God “with one voice” (Rom 15:6) and be eager to “maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3; cf. Ps 133:1; Jn 17:17–21). (CC p. 43)

Paul’s exhortation here invokes “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul began this epistle by defining Christians as those who call upon Jesus’ name (1:2). A few verses later Paul will remind the Corinthians that they were not baptized into the name of Paul (1:13, 15), but into Jesus Christ. Jesus’ instructions were for Baptism into the one name (ὄνομα, singular) of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19), but in Acts trinitarian Baptism is simply called Baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38; 10:48) or “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16; 19:5). The connection between Christian Baptism and calling on the name of Jesus is expressed in the exhortation of Ananias to Saul: “stand up and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling upon his [Jesus’] name” (Acts 22:16). Thus Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians appeals to the very foundation of their faith and their defining identity as those who have been baptized into Jesus’ name and who call upon his name in faith. Baptism and the invocation of Jesus’ name created their unity and are the basis of Paul’s appeal that their unity be restored. (CC pp. 39-40)

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

no divisions – Thus there should be “no factions” in the congregation. The word σχίσμα (“faction”) may mean a “tear” in a garment (Mk 2:21). Although the congregation is not yet so divided that Paul cannot address the Corinthians as a unified whole, it seems they are on the verge of being torn apart. Like his Lord in the high priestly prayer, Paul is concerned that they should “continue to be one” (Jn 17:21, 23). They should not let their loyalty to their favorite leaders rend the community any further. (CC p. 43)

Eph. 4:3,” Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Psalm 133:1, “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!”

John 17:21, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

John 17:23, “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

united in the same mind – Continuing his appeal, Paul urges the Corinthians to be “restored to the same mind and the same conviction” (1 Cor 1:10). The verb “restore” (καταρτίζω) is used for the mending of fishing nets (Mk 1:19). The Corinthians are to “patch things up” among themselves, let themselves “be restored” to their former harmonious condition (cf. 2 Cor 13:11: καταρτίζεσθε, “mend your ways,” RSV). (CC p. 43)

With repetition, Paul emphasizes the main point of his Letter. Christian unity depends on faithfulness to Christ, not chasing one’s own agendas or ideas. In Php 2:1–11, Paul gives the ultimate example of sacrificing self-interest, encouraging single-mindedness among the Christians. “Both our churches and our schools should persevere in the pure doctrine of God’s Word and in that longed-for and godly oneness of mind” (Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, *Concordia*, 5). (TLSB)

Philippians 2:1-11: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

1:11 *Chloe’s people* – Christian travelers, perhaps pursuing business on Chloe’s behalf. (TLSB)

Χλόης—Chloe’s name means “green,” or perhaps “sprouting” or “blooming.” It is related to the adjective χλωρός, used to describe green plants (Mk 6:39; Rev 8:7) and the pale color of a sick person or, in the book of Revelation (6:8), the horse ridden by Death. The corn-goddess Demeter (the Romans called her Ceres) was known as “Chloe Demeter.” Her lowly name may indicate that Chloe was an emancipated slave. (CC p. 41)

Paul does not say “it was *reported* to me ... that there are quarrels among you,” but “it was *made clear* to me ... by Chloe’s people” (1 Cor 1:11). One commentator remarks on the way Paul models a wise pastoral approach in naming “the source of his information. He is not entertaining idle rumors which do so much damage in the church before their evil buzzing can be finally quieted.” His informants may have been Chloe’s relatives or her servants. Chloe herself was almost certainly a Christian or at least sympathetic to the church. Whether she lived in Corinth or Ephesus is not indicated. (CC pp. 43-44)

have reported to me – Chloe’s people had informed Paul that there were “quarrels” (1:11) among the Corinthians. The word “quarrels” (ἔριδες) is almost synonymous with “factions” (σχίσματα) in 1:10. The presence of quarreling and jealousy was a sign that the Corinthians were still “fleshly” people (σαρκικοί, 3:3), controlled by their unregenerate human nature. Paul’s list of “the works of the flesh” in Gal 5:19–20 includes “quarreling” (ἔρις; NRSV strife”) and closely related sins like “enmities ... jealousy, anger, and selfish ambition” (ἐριθεία, i.e., self-promoting factionalizing). Anyone who habitually indulged in these sins was in danger of forfeiting his share in God’s kingdom (Gal 5:21). (CC p. 44)

quarreling. See Gal 5:19; Jas 4:12. (CSB)

1:12 *I follow* – These leaders did not intend to attract loyalty to themselves, but groups arose with an allegiance to each. Paul was the first missionary, and perhaps his teaching was regarded as most authentic. (TLSB)

The regrettable tendency to quarreling had become widespread in Corinth. Most unfortunate was the egotism which Paul brings out by the four-times repeated “I” (ἐγώ): “I belong to Paul,” “I belong to Apollos,” “I belong to Cephas,” “I belong to Christ” (1:12). (CC)

Paul seems to have listed the factions according to the importance he ascribes to each “leader,” beginning with himself as least important and ending with Christ. It is clear that none of these

“leaders” encouraged the development of a faction around himself. What is not so clear is the motivation that led to the formation of each group. (CC p. 44)

A significant group seems to have stood by Paul as the church’s founding father who had labored among them for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). They believed he should be held in honor as the first missionary to have reached them. They may also have preferred his more direct and unpretentious style of teaching. But Paul disapproves of this group as much as the others. As he perceives, the Paul-people are not motivated by concern for the truth of the Gospel. Rather, in a self-interested and boastful fashion, they are busy forming a personality cult around the apostle, just as the other groups for their own selfish purposes are putting Apollos or Cephas or “Christ” on a pedestal. (CC p. 44)

After Paul had planted the church in Corinth, Apollos, the gifted and eloquent Alexandrian, was encouraged by the church in Ephesus to travel to Achaia (Greece). “On his arrival he greatly helped those who by grace had believed” (Acts 18:27). Apollos was thus honored as the one who “watered” what Paul had planted in Corinth (1 Cor 3:6). By comparison with Apollos’ rhetorical skills, Paul’s preaching seemed—to some at least—unimpressive and simplistic (2:1–3; 2 Cor 10:10; 11:6). (CC p. 45)

According to B. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, 176, nn. 143–44, it seems clear from Acts 18:24–28 “that Apollos is trained in rhetoric and makes use of it during his ministry in Corinth.” The expressions ἀνὴρ λόγιος (“an eloquent man,” Acts 18:24), δύννατος (“powerful,” Acts 18:24), and ἐπιδείκνυμι (“to demonstrate,” Acts 18:28) all have rhetorical connotations. (CC p. 45)

But there is no suggestion that Apollos ever encouraged the formation of a faction bearing his name. All the evidence indicates that he and Paul worked in harmony (cf. 16:12, where Paul informs them he has been urging his “brother” Apollos to pay them another visit). (CC p. 45)

The “Paul” and “Apollos” factions may have been the largest. Certainly the dispute between them seems to have weighed most heavily on Paul’s mind. In chapters 3 and 4 he returns to the question of a proper evaluation of the role of Apollos and himself (3:4–9; 4:6). But the “Cephas” and “Christ” groups are not mentioned again. (CC p. 45)

The group that had formed around Cephas is more difficult to account for than the Paul and Apollos groups. It is possible that Cephas had made a personal visit to Corinth accompanied by his wife, for the Corinthians were familiar with his habit of taking his wife along on his travels (9:5). If the church had been host to both Peter and his wife, this would more readily explain some members’ attachment to him. But it is difficult to say whether the Corinthians knew about his travel habits from personal observation or simply from reports. It is also possible that some, especially those Corinthians who were Jewish-Christian in background, had been baptized by Peter, and on that basis had formed a personal attachment to him. Some of these Jewish Christians may have arrived in Corinth proudly carrying letters of recommendation from the chief apostle (cf. 2 Cor 3:1). But more than this we cannot say. There is not one piece of evidence in the epistle that the Cephas group was a Judaizing faction upholding a stricter attitude to Jewish law, particularly food laws. (CC p. 45)

Finally, the “Christ” group is the most difficult to account for. Numerous theories have been advanced. One commentator gives a useful summary of the identifications that have been proposed: (CC p. 46)

Jews from Palestine who had known Jesus or his brother James; Judaizers, like those who infiltrated the Galatian churches; heretics at Corinth who refused to acknowledge any apostolic authority and who claimed direct communication with Christ through the Spirit; spiritualists or pneumatics (*pneuma* means Spirit) who could confess Christ but wanted to hear nothing of the human Jesus (see 12:3); or Gnostics (Knowers) who claimed special knowledge, freedom from authority, and all earthly leaders. A desperate solution by some is to strike the name Christ and replace it with Crispus (from [1:]14)! (CC)

What does seem certain is that the “Christ” faction was reacting against the other three. Rather than advocating any distinctive doctrine or practice, they may have been individuals proclaiming themselves to be weary of the bickering, and saying in a superior fashion, “a pox on all your houses; I belong to Christ.” On the other hand, their critical attitude toward their faithful pastors suggests that the Christ group may have seen themselves as a particularly “spiritual” group, claiming “to have direct spiritual access to Christ apart from any humanly mediated tradition.” Proud of their giftedness and their γνῶσις, “knowledge” (1:5), they may have been especially prone to a theology of glory in which there was little room for the crucified Christ and cruciform pastors. But one cannot belong to Christ while rejecting the apostolic ministry instituted by God himself. Thus Paul also opposes this group. (CC p. 46)

Apollos. He had carried on a fruitful ministry in Corinth (Ac 18:24–28; 19:1). (CSB)

His teaching may have been more advanced than Paul’s (cf 3:6). (TLSB)

Cephas. It has been suggested that those who followed Peter in Corinth were Jewish Christians. (CSB)

Aram for “Peter”; often associated with the Jewish origins of the faith, Peter may have carried particular authority as a follower of Jesus in His earthly ministry. (TLSB)

I follow Christ – The nature of the “Christ” party is not certain; the slogan disparaged believers, and so betrayed a partisan spirit. (TLSB)

1:13-17 Paul does not suggest that Corinthians were baptized in other people’s names. Such baptisms could lead to a cult of celebrity or new sects (cf Ac 19:3, “John’s baptism”). (TLSB)

1:13 *Is Christ divided?* See 12:12–13. (CSB)

Rhetorical, sarcastic questions. Paul indicates that loyalty to him is misplaced; he is but a messenger and servant. (TLSB)

Paul’s response to the news from Chloe’s people begins with three rhetorical questions: “Is Christ divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (1:13). Paul asks incredulously whether Christ could possibly have been divided into competing factions. Could there possibly be a separate Pauline Christ, another Apollos Christ, a Petrine Christ, and an unmarked Christ? To ask the question is to answer it; the idea is preposterous! Obviously the Lord Jesus is one indivisible person. And just as his person cannot be fragmented, so it is inconceivable that his body, the church, should be factionalized. (CC p. 47)

into my name. Implies becoming a follower or intimate associate. (CSB)

Taking only his own party to task, and allowing the other groups to fill in the blanks, Paul shows the absurdity of their position: “Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” Now, for the first time in this letter, he points to the pivotal role of Christ’s crucifixion and of Baptism into Christ and Christ’s name as the appropriation of Christ’s death. From the beginning, the heart of the Gospel preached to the Corinthians had been “Christ died for our sins” (15:3). In the light of their faith in Christ crucified, how could they make so much of Paul or any other minister of the Gospel? After all, they had not been purchased by the blood of Paul; they were not Paul’s property. The great foundation of their faith remained Jesus Christ and him crucified (2:2; 3:11). (CC p. 47)

Baptism in the name of Jesus was the other foundational event in the life of the church. Through Baptism, the believers had appropriated the salvation Christ won on the cross. Thus it was absurd for the Paul faction to idolize Paul as if their salvation and identity were to be found in him. (CC p. 47)

1:14 *I baptize none of you* – Naturally, Paul did not approach his work in Corinth with the intention of baptizing as few people as possible. However, in retrospect he is grateful to God for his providence in not letting him baptize more families than he did. As Bengel comments: “The Providence of God reigns often in events, of which the reason is afterwards discovered.” (CC p. 48)

God had seen to it that Paul baptized only Crispus and Gaius. Crispus was the synagogue official who had been one of Paul’s early converts in Corinth, believing in the Lord “with his whole household” (Acts 18:8). Presumably Paul baptized the whole family, but here he only mentions Crispus as the family’s head. (CC p. 48)

The name Crispus is Latin. It has been suggested that he may have been a Roman citizen and therefore belonged to a family of colonists who had settled in Corinth (D. Gill, “Achaia,” *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. Gill and C. Gempf, 451). G. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 69–119, argues that Crispus belonged to Corinth’s upper classes (cf. G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 62, n. 70). An important criterion for the election of an ἀρχισυνάγωγος, “leader of a synagogue” (Acts 18:8), was his capacity to bestow benefactions on the synagogue community (B. Blue, “Acts and the House Church,” *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. Gill and C. Gempf, 176). (CC p. 48)

Gaius is probably the man Paul describes in his epistle to the Romans (written from Corinth) as “my host and the host of the whole church” (Rom 16:23). His full name may have been Gaius Titius Justus. Titius Justus is mentioned in Acts as the God-fearing Gentile who welcomed Paul into his home after he had been driven from the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:7). Like Crispus, then, he belonged to the first group of converts, and for that reason had been baptized by the apostle himself. He was **probably** a man of means, which made it possible for him to host the whole church. In this respect he and Crispus were different from most members of the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 1:26–29). Gaius may have been one of the Roman freedmen who came to Corinth and made their wealth in commerce. (CC p. 48)

1:15 *baptized in my name* – Baptism is administered in the name of the triune God, thus in Jesus’ name. It means being buried and raised with Christ. The logical conclusion of the “divided Christ” mentality (cf v 13) would elevate the servants into Christ’s place, though they have nothing to offer of themselves. (TLSB)

1:16 household. Other examples of households being baptized are those of Cornelius (Ac 10:24, 48), Lydia (Ac 16:15) and the Philippian jailer (Ac 16:33–34). The term may include family members, servants or anyone who lived in the house. (CSB)

Gk *oikos*, “house”; all who lived there, including slaves and children. (TLSB)

οἶκος—Literally, this denotes a “house” or “household.” “The house was both a fellowship and a place of meeting.” In addition to the household of Stephanas, the NT mentions the households of Cornelius (Acts 11:14), Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31, 34), Crispus (Acts 18:8), Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:16; 4:19), and Philemon (Philemon 2). The early church broke bread “by house” (Acts 2:46) and proclaimed the Gospel in the temple and in houses (Acts 5:42). Michel notes: “It is explicitly emphasized that the conversion of a man leads his whole family to the faith; this would include wife, children, servants and relatives living in the house.” Thus “the house and the family are the smallest natural groups in the total structure of the congregation.” It is likely that any infants and children were baptized when a family or household was baptized (Acts 16:15; 1 Cor 1:16; cf. Acts 18:8). (CC pp. 41-42)

Stephanas. Finally, Paul recalls “the family of Stephanas” (1:16). This family had been “the firstfruits of Achaia” (16:15). (CC p. 49)

They were noted for their significant service to the saints (16:15). Why then did Paul momentarily forget him, when Stephanas was with him at the time in Ephesus, together with the other members of the Corinthian delegation, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16:17)? One suggestion is that it may have been precisely because Stephanas was with Paul that Paul forgot him. Preoccupied with recalling names back in Corinth, Paul momentarily failed to consider the Corinthians who were in Ephesus. We might even imagine there may have been some amusement as Stephanas himself or one of the other delegates jogged Paul’s memory. After this lapse, Paul was not confident he had included everyone, so he adds, “Beyond that, I do not know if I baptized anyone else” (1:16). Keeping a tally of those he had baptized apparently was not high on his agenda. (CC p. 49)

I do not know – Paul confesses the weakness of his memory. For Paul, it was not important that he might have baptized, but that a person was baptized into Christ. (TLSB)

1:17 not ... to baptize. Paul is not minimizing baptism; rather, he is asserting that his God-given task was primarily to preach. Jesus (Jn 4:2) and Peter (Ac 10:48) also had others baptize for them. (CSB)

Jesus Himself did not baptize but entrusted this to others (Jn 4:1–2). As an apostle, Paul emphasized his calling to preach and to plant congregations. (TLSB)

to preach – Baptism had not been the apostle’s top priority, “for Christ did not send [him] to baptize but to preach the Gospel” (1:17). In the verb “sent” (ἀπέστειλεν) we hear an echo of the word “apostle” (ἀπόστολος). Christ’s commission to Paul had not placed Baptism as the major component. Jesus himself did not baptize; he entrusted baptizing to his disciples (Jn 4:1–2). The apostles Peter and John did not baptize the Samaritan converts; that had already been done by the deacon Philip (Acts 8:12–17). To say this is not to depreciate the Sacrament of Baptism and the gifts received there. The point is that the task of administering Baptism could be carried out by any of the apostles’ assistants. (CC p. 50)

On the other hand, the “elders” (pastors) whom Paul began to appoint from the time of his first missionary journey (Acts 14:23) had much more limited local responsibilities. Their duties have always included not only preaching but the administration of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. (CC p. 50)

Paul’s call and highest ambition in his role as apostle to the Gentiles was to preach the Gospel in places where Christ had never been named (Rom 15:20). His commission was transparochial. Thus his ministry took him from province to province as he evangelized, taught, and exhorted the new converts until Christ was formed in them (Gal 4:19). With his broad responsibilities and extensive travels, it was impossible for him to attend to the ongoing pastoral care and administration of the Sacraments required in each place. As already noted, these local responsibilities he entrusted, from the beginning of his missionary journeys, to “elders” (pastors) appointed in each church (Acts 14:23). (CC p. 52)

In telling the Corinthians that Christ did not send him to baptize, it is clearly not Paul’s intention to encourage any disregard for the Sacraments or the regular pastoral ministry. His point, simply, is that baptizing was not the chief part of the specific charge of his apostolic office. (CC p. 52)

words of eloquent wisdom. Lit. “wisdom of speech.” Paul’s mission was not to couch the gospel in the language of the trained orator, who had studied the techniques of influencing people by persuasive arguments. (CSB)

Paul downplays his skills as a speaker. (TLSB)

Having praised preaching so highly, Paul hastens to add that the preacher should not rely on his “wisdom/cleverness of word” (σοφία λόγου, 1 Cor 1:17). His “way with words” may be a fine servant of the Gospel, if he employs it humbly to that end. But if he uses it to focus attention on his eloquence rather than the cross, then the good servant has become the bad master. (CC p. 51)

St. Augustine comments: A teacher should not think “that anything may be said better than that which is said truthfully; nor should the teacher serve the words, but the words the teacher. This is what the Apostle meant by ‘not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ be made void’ ” (*On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. [Prentice Hall, 1958] 165). (CC p. 51)

The expression σοφία λόγου includes the ability to communicate with charm and eloquence, a skill in which Paul did not excel, at least in comparison with Apollos. He had come to the Corinthians “in weakness and fear and much trembling” (2:3). While they granted that his letters were “weighty and strong,” they thought he had no presence in public and no ability as a speaker (2 Cor 10:10; 11:6). Their superficial judgments focused on the manner of his presentation rather than its substance. (CC p. 51)

emptied of its power – The Gospel stands on its own and is not strengthened by rhetoric or logic. However, a speaker may use these skills in service to the Gospel. (TLSB)

κενωθῆ—κενόω, related to the adjective κενός, “empty,” literally means to empty something of its contents or power, “destroy, render void, of no effect.” A false emphasis on sophisticated technique would rob the Gospel “of its offence and therewith of its divine force and efficacy to save.” Paul will use the adjective in 1 Cor 15:14 when he says that “if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain [κενόν], and your faith is also in vain [κενή].” (CC p. 42)

Any reliance on human wisdom, whether in formulating arguments or in presenting them, would empty the cross of Christ of its power (1:17). For its power is in its weakness (cf. 2 Cor 12:9; 13:4). The failure to present the word of the cross in a straightforward manner robs that word of any opportunity to do its powerful work. All that the speaker has accomplished is to focus people's attention on himself and his own ability with words. To this issue Paul will turn next. (CC)

1:10-17 Divisions in the Church are denial of the one Baptism into Christ, who was crucified for all. His faithful servants preach the Gospel and are not to become objects of unhealthy devotion. The Triune God alone in the object of our faith and hope. Grant us such faithful ministers, dear Lord, who baptize and preach in your name and authority. Amen. (TLSB)

Christ the Wisdom and Power of God

18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1:18-31 In the cultural context, one ought to remember that many early Christians were slaves or lower-class people. The critic Celsus observed of the Christians: "The following are the rules laid down by them. Let no one come to us who has been instructed, or who is wise or prudent (for such qualifications are deemed evil by us); but if there be any ignorant, or unintelligent, or uninstructed, or foolish persons, let them come with confidence. By which words, acknowledging that such individuals are worthy of their God, they manifestly show that they desire and are able to gain over only the silly, and the mean, and the stupid, with women and children" (Origen, "Contra Celsum," *Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of The Writings of the Fathers Down to A. D. 325*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872], 125, book 3, ch 44). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

C. K. Barrett (in *A Commentary on The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper and Row, 1968], 61) informs readers that the citation of Jer 9:24 in v 31 is taken from the Haphtorah (in Jewish synagogue usage in Paul's day, a prophetic reading that followed the Torah) for Ab 9, and that we might suppose Paul cites it as a "text for his sermon" for that day. In light of the citation, this whole text becomes a reminder of the sort of boasting God rebukes and the sort of boasting he commends. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:18 *words of the cross* – Key note for the Letter. “The Gospel ... preaches righteousness and gives the Spirit” (FC SD V 22). (TLSB)

Paul has been arguing that reliance on one’s skill as a speaker can rob the cross of Christ of its power. He now sets out to cure the Corinthians of their fascination with rhetoric. After all, they should know that no matter how well they dress up the word of the cross, the world will always find it unpalatable. For the world marches to a different drummer. Its enthusiasm always is for whatever seems attractive and successful. Its basic orientation is toward what has aptly been called “the theology of glory.” But now, in opposition to the world’s lust for glamour, success, and “image,” Paul sets forth “the word [the theology] of the cross” (1:18–25). Only that sobering word will provide the Corinthians with a basis for overcoming their divisions and restoring their fellowship in Christ. (CC p. 64)

“The Theology of Glory” and “The Theology of the Cross”

These expressions derive from Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation of 1518. In thesis 20, for example, Luther cites 1 Cor 1:21, 25, and continues: “It is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise. ... For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ.” He adds, then, in thesis 21: “God can be found only in suffering and the cross. ... It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God’s.” The *power* of God is visible in creation (Rom 1:18–32), but the *grace* of God can only be found in God’s Word and Sacraments, on the cross and in the Supper, which to the world appear weak and foolish. (CC pp. 64–65)

is folly – μωρία—The English word “moron” is derived from μωρός. (CC p. 62)

The Corinthians need to be realistic that “the word of the cross” will always be “foolishness to those who are being destroyed” (1 Cor 1:18). In itself, of course, the Gospel is not foolishness; only to those who are being destroyed is it foolishness. The world will always think Christians are wasting their time. There was a period when even Jesus’ mother and brothers thought he was “beside himself” (Mk 3:21). Many of his Jewish opponents claimed that he was insane (Jn 10:20). Later the Roman governor Festus charged Paul with insanity: “You are out of your mind, Paul! ... Too much learning is driving you insane!” (Acts 26:24). Through the centuries the message of the cross has drawn similar abuse from Christianity’s cultured and less-cultured despisers. In their view, Christians “are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19). (CC p. 65)

So long has the cross been a centerpiece in churches that Christians can easily forget the shame and offensiveness it represented in the ancient world. Only criminals and recalcitrant slaves were crucified. Indeed, Matthew’s gospel portrays Jesus’ death as that of a slave worth thirty pieces of silver (Mt 26:15; cf. Ex 21:32), and Paul draws a connection between Jesus’ taking the form of a slave (μορφήν δούλου) and dying the death of the cross (Phil 2:7–8). In short, as has been well said, “to assert that God himself accepted death in the form of a crucified Jewish manual worker from Galilee in order to break the power of death and bring salvation to all men could only seem folly and madness to men of ancient times.” (CC p. 65)

The cross of Christ is the action of God for us and our salvation (2 Cor 5:18–19). Its power (Rom 1:16–17) is not visible to empirical observations. It meets neither the demands nor the expectations of natural man. Seekers are not drawn to the cross; in fact, the cross is repugnant to unregenerate man and drives him away. Yet its power is at work in the Gospel call. Through the

Gospel the Spirit overcomes our natural resistance and brings us to faith in Christ crucified. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

to those who are perishing – Those who see only foolishness in the cross deny its power to save them from eternal destruction. (TLSB)

τοῖς μὲν ἀπολλυμένοις ... τοῖς δὲ σωζομένοις—In the middle voice ἀπόλλυμι means “perish, die,” especially “of eternal death” (BAGD 2 a α). English versions usually treat its participle as middle: “those who are perishing” (NRSV, NKJV, NIV). There are no NT passages where the verb is unambiguously passive. However, the parallelism with τοῖς σωζομένοις, which definitely is passive (“those who are being saved,” *not* the middle “those who are saving themselves”), suggests that here τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις is also passive: “those who are being destroyed [by God].” The passive sense is confirmed by its echo in 1:19, where God is the subject of the active verb: “I will destroy [ἀπολωῶ] the wisdom of the wise.” (CC p. 61)

Both of the participles are in the present tense, and they derive their temporal sense from the present tense main verb, ἐστίν, which indicates that some are now in the process of being destroyed, while others are now being saved and are already on the way that will finally lead to their eternal salvation. For Paul, σωτηρία is mostly an eschatological term. Again, as in 1:7–8, the Last Day is in view. (CC p. 61)

power of God – The cross is the instrument of God’s salvation. (TLSB)

On the other hand, “to us who are being saved it [the word of the cross] is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Note that despite the divisions he has just deplored, Paul does not classify the Corinthians among those being lost. The words “to us” assure them that they and he are united as the blessed recipients of salvation. For them, as for him, the word of the cross is a “fragrance from life to life” (2 Cor 2:16). (CC pp. 65-66)

According to Pauline theology, believers are surrounded by salvation—past, present, and future. Having been saved by grace in the past (Eph 2:5, 8; cf. Rom 8:24; Titus 3:5), they are now day by day in the process of being saved (1 Cor 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor 2:15), a process which continues until they are finally saved on the last day (Rom 5:9; 11:26). Above all, it is this sure hope of rescue from God’s wrath on the Last Day which lends the words “save” and “salvation” their color. (CC p. 66)

Our salvation is accomplished by “the power of God” effective in “the word of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18). The voice of the Gospel is not foolishness, but “the power of God for salvation” (Rom 1:16). Thus Paul’s ministry was “a demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor 2:4). Through his preaching, God established his kingdom “in power” (4:20). Hence Paul was not interested in how well his spiritually “inflated” opponents could talk, but in their power (4:19). While outwardly he and his coworkers appeared to be weak, he rejoiced in weakness and blessed God when there was no more room for self-reliance (2 Cor 1:8–9), for then he knew the power of Christ would rest on him (2 Cor 12:9–10; 13:4). (CC p. 66)

1:19 This quote speaks against people who “draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me” (Is 29:13). (TLSB)

The quote from Is 29:14 reminds readers of Judah’s humanly wise but spiritually foolish policy of alliance with Egypt when Assyrian invasion loomed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

I will destroy – ἀπολῶ—1 Cor 1:19 quotes LXX Is 29:14 exactly, except for the last word (see the next textual note, on ἀθετήσω). The verb ἀπολῶ, “I will destroy,” echoes the participle in 1:18, τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, “those who are being destroyed.” The plan God announced in Isaiah’s day to destroy the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the understanding is being carried out now wherever the “foolishness” of the Gospel is preached, including Corinth. (CC p. 62)

the wise. Aristides said that on every street in Corinth one met a so-called wise man, who had his own solutions to the world’s problems. (CSB)

The Lord foils mankind’s “vast intelligence” and grandiose plans (Gen 11:1-9; Psalms 2; 33:10). The quote in this passage is from Is. 29:14 and refers to the people of Hezekiah’s day whose worship was insincere and “made up of rules taught by men” (Is. 29:13). Unless enlightened by God’s Word, human “wisdom” is foolishness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

I will thwart – ἀθετήσω—Paul’s source in LXX Is 29:14 has the verb κρύψω, “I will conceal.” (CC p. 62)

BAGD, 1 a, opts for “thwart, confound” as the best translation for ἀθετέω in 1 Cor 1:19. However, the stronger verb “reject” (BAGD, 1 b) more accurately renders the sense of the verb not only here but throughout the NT (cf., e.g., Mk 6:26; 7:9; Lk 10:16). In the LXX ἀθετέω frequently means “to rebel against, to want to have nothing to do with someone” (e.g., 4 Kingdoms 18:7 [MT/ET 2 Ki 18:7]; 2 Chr 10:19). On the Last Day God will publicly repudiate the wisdom of the wise and reject those who were captivated by it. He will also claim as his own those who instead believed the foolish word of the cross. (CC p. 62)

1:20 *who is wise*. Probably a reference to Gentile philosophers in general. (CSB)

Jewish scribes and Greek philosophers sought wisdom through debate, but they are “of this age,” in contrast to God’s timeless wisdom. (TLSB)

“Where is the one who is wise?” Aristides said that one met a so-called wise man who had his own solution to the world’s problems on every street in Corinth (*Concordia Self-Study Bible* [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986], 1748). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Although Paul may no longer be formally quoting the OT, we still hear the voice of Isaiah in the series of rhetorical questions which mock the wisdom of this age (1:20). The first two questions Paul draws directly from Isaiah, whom he has just cited and will cite another five times in the epistle. That “splendid and highly enlightened prophet” also had a keen sense for the difference between reliance on human strength and wisdom, and a quiet reliance on God (e.g., Is 7:4; 25:9; 26:3–4; 30:15). (CC p. 67)

scribe. Probably the Jewish teacher of the law. (CSB)

The first three questions all begin with the interrogative “where” (ποῦ). In its original context in Isaiah, the first question (“where is a wise man?”) mocks the wise counselors of Pharaoh for their failure to foresee the divine judgments coming upon Egypt (Is 19:12). The second question from the prophet (“where is a scribe?”) targets foreign scribes, men of strange speech, who would tally tribute levied on Israel (Is 33:18). The third question (“where is a debater of this age?”) is Paul’s

own free formulation, targeting anyone who raises arguments against the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor 10:4–5). (CC p. 67)

Adapting Isaiah to his own day, Paul’s first target is probably the typical sage of Greek culture, the philosopher or rhetorician, while the second object of his mockery, the “scribe,” is the Jewish rabbi, and the “debater of this age” is any clever person opposed to the true knowledge of God. Although some think this analysis is too subtle, it suits the context which goes on to speak of Jews and Greeks (1 Cor 1:22). What seems especially clear is that the second question refers to Jewish teachers of the Law. The Greeks never referred to a scholar as a “scribe” (γραμματεὺς); they used that word for a civil officer like the “town clerk” of Acts 19:35. (CC p. 67)

debater of this age. Probably refers to the Greek sophists, who engaged in long and subtle disputes. (CSB)

οὗ αἰῶνος τούτου—The phrase ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος occurs eight times in Paul (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6 (twice); 2:8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 1:21). “This [present] age” is characterized by sin (Gal 1:4) and transience (cf. Paul’s use of the parallel expression τοῦ κόσμου τούτου in 1 Cor 7:31). It stands in contrast to the coming age (Eph 1:21; 2:7; cf. the rabbinic contrast between “this age,” הַיָּמִים הַזֵּהִים, and “the age to come,” הַיָּמִים הַבָּרִיִּים). According to Paul’s apocalyptic outlook, “the new aeon has begun already, though as yet concealed from the eyes of men, in and with the resurrection of Christ, inasmuch as this is the beginning of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).” Thus the new aeon overlaps the old. (CC pp. 62-63)

Paul now sets out to demonstrate what he has just asserted by means of his rhetorical questions. His argument and terminology anticipate his epistle to the Romans, 1:18–22 (cf. “knowing God,” “claiming to be wise,” “being made foolish,” Rom 1:21–22). (CC p. 68)

Even more, they echo Jesus’ words of thanksgiving to the Father in Mt 11:25–26: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things [insight into the person and work of Christ] from *the wise and understanding* [cf. 1 Cor 1:19] and revealed them to babies. Yes, Father, for this was your *gracious will* [εὐδοκία, corresponding to εὐδόκησεν in 1 Cor 1:21].” Thus Paul underscores what both Isaiah and his Lord had said about the way God surprises the world by rejecting its values and elevating what it despises. For centuries Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis had been engaged in the quest to know God. “Through ... wisdom” (1 Cor 1:21) the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers had sought to understand the structure of the universe, and Socrates and his successors had tried to understand human beings in relation to their world. But with all their intellectual ingenuity they had missed the mark. Meanwhile, the rabbis had busied themselves with the minute study of Torah, but over their hearts lay a veil which is only removed when a person turns to the Lord (2 Cor 3:15). (CC p. 68)

God made foolish the wisdom of the world. All humanly devised philosophical systems end in meaninglessness because they have a wrong concept of God and his revelation. (CSB)

1:21 Human wisdom cannot lead to God, who reveals Himself in the message of the cross. “The forgiveness of sins ... cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. How would we know about it otherwise?” (LC V 31). (TLSB)

foolish the wisdom. Jesus expresses a similar thought in Lk 10:21. It is God’s intention that worldly wisdom should not be the means of knowing him. (CSB)

folly...we preach. Not that preaching is foolish, but that the message being preached (Christ crucified) is viewed by the world as foolish. (CSB)

Because of the folly of human thinking about how to attain the knowledge of God, it was God's gracious and sovereign decision to lead people to the right knowledge of himself by that most unimpressive means, "the silliness of preaching" (1 Cor 1:21). By "preaching" (κήρυγμα) Paul does not mean merely the act of preaching; he constantly bears in mind its content, the cross of Christ (1:18). As he goes on to say (1:23), "we preach Christ crucified." (CC pp. 68-69)

All the wisdom coming from the teachers, philosophers, and sophists of the day is meaningless since they are not properly focused on God. Have their wisdom and intellect saved one soul? Have their teachings and philosophies forgiven one sin? (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

We dare not lull ourselves into believing that the struggle of men against Scripture and the Christian religion with its appeal to reason (science) will ever cease, since "the natural man" (1 Cor 2:14) is God's enemy (Rom 8:7) and can only regard what is the essence of Christianity, the Gospel, as foolishness ("they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them." 1 Cor. 2:14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

1:22-23 These verses are a clear demonstration of the situation in which Gospel proclamation always finds itself in this world! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:22 signs – Judaism sought miraculous confirmation as God's support for messenger and message. (TLSB)

The Jews asked Jesus to perform signs (Matt 12:38; 16:1–4). They wanted miraculous displays of divine strength, proving that Jesus was the Messiah. When Paul wrote this letter (A.D. 55 or 56), there was a large crop of false messiahs. In A.D. 45, a man called Theudas persuaded thousands of Jews to abandon their homes and follow him out to the Jordan. He promised he would divide the water and they could walk through on dry land. In A.D. 54, another messiah persuaded 30,000 people to follow him to the Mount of Olives. He promised that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The demand for signs (as Israel did in the wilderness) or wisdom is a manifestation of humanity's rebellion against God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

The devil tempted Jesus to perform self-serving miracles (Matt 4:1–11). People also asked Jesus to perform signs (Luke 23:8–12; John 2:18), but he insisted that the only sign to be given them was that of Jonah, whose three-day interment in the fish and subsequent life were types of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (Matt 12:38–40; 16:1–4; cf. John 2:19). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Nonbelievers, on the other hand, set up themselves as the arbiters of truth. "Man," they believe, "is the measure of all things." Thus they demand to be convinced by evidence that falls within the parameters of their own experience. This nonbelieving world is classified by Paul into two groups, Jews and Greeks. What they had in common was a quest for impressive signs of outward success, whether that be a display of power (like the plagues against Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the raining down of bread from heaven, or the ejecting of the Romans from Palestine; compare modern demands for health and wealth) or a brilliant show of intellectual prowess. The

Jews, for example, constantly demanded that Jesus give them a powerful sign from heaven to prove his messianic claims (Mt 12:38; 16:1; Lk 23:8; Jn 2:23; 6:30). Otherwise they would not believe (Jn 4:48). In response, Jesus told them: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign will be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights” (Mt 12:39–40). In other words, when the Jews demanded a sign, Jesus pointed to his death and resurrection. Of course, to those with eyes to see, the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles were powerful confirmations of the word of the cross. But those miracles were always gracious gifts; they were never performed on demand. (CC p. 69)

Greeks seek wisdom. True of Greeks in general, but especially of the Greek philosophers. (CSB)

The Gk for “philosophy” means “love of wisdom.” (TLSB)

The Greeks on their part looked for wisdom. The Greek historian Herodotus had said of them: “All Greeks were zealous for every kind of learning.” Paul could speak from firsthand experience, having encountered the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:18). But we should not think only of the Greeks of Corinth and Athens. From the parallel “Gentiles” in 1 Cor 1:23, we see that Paul uses the word “Greeks” to include all non-Jewish peoples of the Roman Empire, where the influence of the Greek language and culture was widespread (cf. Rom 1:16). (CC p. 69)

The present active form shows a habitual action and describes what they are always doing. The Greeks expected to be reasoned and argued into a salvation that they find rationally acceptable. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

Paul contrasts human wisdom with God’s wisdom. English words such as *sophist*, *sophomore* (an oxymoron), and *philosophy* contain the same Greek root as *sophia*, “wisdom.” In classical Greek, the word could denote manual skills and artistic talent; acquaintance and familiarity with something; sound judgment and practical intelligence; philosophical wisdom of the type attributed to Plato and Aristotle; and in an evil sense, craftiness and cunning (Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1889] 737). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

During the NT era, there were a variety of philosophical schools, including the Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, and Epicureans, all of whom were active in Athens (John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986] 122–23). Each of these philosophical schools claimed to possess the ethical wisdom that was the key to life. Paul had dialogued with the Greeks at Athens (Acts 17:16–34) where they spent their time discussing new ideas, so he was familiar with the Greek quest for wisdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

1:23 *but we* – ἡμεῖς—The pronoun is emphatic. Paul is contrasting the activity of Jews and Greeks with what “we [apostles]” are doing. (CC p. 63)

Christ crucified. See 2:2. (CSB)

The Jews expected a Messiah (Hbr for “Christ”), but did not expect that He should be crucified. (TLSB)

Paul refers to his practice of preaching only Christ crucified. Paul's initial trip to Corinth is narrated in Acts 18:1–18, and he describes how he preached to them in 1 Cor 2:1–2. For an excellent description of the history of the practice of crucifixion and the scandal it represented in the ancient world, see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977). The Greeks and Romans reserved crucifixion as a method of capital punishment for the most heinous crimes committed by slaves and despicable criminals, and the cross connoted utmost disgrace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Preaching obtains its power from what is preached. To believe on one who was crucified and to expect from such a one salvation, that seems to the natural man the height of folly. (Stoeckhardt)

The Hellenistic philosophical schools also generally held the physical and the body in low esteem, and considered the good and the divine to exist in the realm of the spiritual. To them it was silly to speak of God becoming incarnate in a human body. It is said that Augustine, who was a great scholar long before he became a Christian, claimed that he could find parallels among the Greeks for almost all the teachings of Christianity, but he never found anything like the Word who “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). To believe that a man could rise from the dead was also foolishness to Greeks. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

stumbling block to Jews. † They expected a triumphant, political Messiah (Ac 1:6), not a crucified one. Also, the teaching that deity became incarnate and died was repugnant to them. (CSB)

Gk *skandalon*, a cause for offense and rejection, as in Eng “scandal.” (TLSB)

skanedalon. A “scandal”; a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare* (figuratively *cause of displeasure or sin*):—occasion to fall (of stumbling), offence, thing that offends, stumbling-block. (QV)

“To Jews” a crucified Messiah was “a stumbling block” (1 Cor 1:23), “an obstacle in coming to faith.” While there was a great diversity of messianic expectations among first-century Jews, those expectations consistently were for a *powerful* figure. Moreover, anyone who had been crucified was repugnant, having been cursed by God (Deut 21:22–23; cf. Gal 3:13). For Jews, then, the cross was the most shameful death imaginable (Heb 12:2). In debating with Jews, the early Christian apologists had to devote considerable attention to why Israel's Messiah had to be crucified. (CC p. 70)

The Jews, in contrast, knew from the OT instances of bodily resurrection (1 Ki 17:7–24; 2 Ki 4:8–37; 13:21; cf. Ezek 37:1–14). They also knew of God's long history of dwelling among his people and making his grace available through physical means (the tabernacle, temple, animal sacrifices, circumcision, Passover, etc.). The concepts of incarnation and resurrection were familiar to Jews (though the Sadducees rejected the idea of resurrection, as many liberal Jews do today). But they looked for a Savior who would effect political as well as religious liberation, and in their estimation Jesus failed in this respect. Anyone who was crucified was under the curse of God (Deut 21:23), and most did not understand that the Messiah took on this curse for our sake (Gal 3:13–14). Even though several prominent OT texts clearly depict the Messiah as suffering (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; etc), these passages played little role in the theology of most of the Jewish sects of the first century A.D. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

This draws to the mind of the original hearers/readers the stick an animal stumbles over, causing the trap to shut. The Jews would see the crucifixion of the Messiah as a stumbling block because anyone killed on a cross was cursed. It was scandalous to think that their God was executed as a criminal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 2)

Expecting a victorious and military human messiah, the Jews for the most part would not accept a crucified messiah, even more problematic was the claim that the Almighty Creator would deign to become incarnate. But the greatest problem for the Jews was the message of the Gospel itself. For the Good News of free forgiveness through Jesus contradicted the very core of their self righteous religiosity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

folly to Gentiles.† Greeks and Romans were sure that no reputable person would be crucified, so it was unthinkable that a crucified criminal could be the Savior. Also, the claim of Jesus' resurrection was considered foolishness by the Gentiles. (CSB)

The Greeks certainly found it untenable to have an innocent and reputable person – much less a god be crucified. And the thought of Christ's blood being shed to forgive their sins was utterly repulsive and against all earthly wisdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 4)

1:24 are called – Paul terms the Corinthian Christians “called” also in 1:2, where he associates the term with their being “sanctified” and “holy” (*hēgiasmenois . . . klētois hagiois*). The Jews thought of themselves as the holy people, chosen by God, and they based their hope of salvation on that fact. But many of them did not continue in the faith God revealed to his chosen OT people. Peter applies the prominent OT terms for God's people to believers in Christ (1 Pet 2:9). Similar to OT believers, Christians base their hope of salvation on the fact that they have been called by God in baptism (1:13–16), chosen, and justified by God's grace in Christ. They are called into fellowship with Christ (1:9). The ones called are the ones who “are being saved” (1:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

power. See Ro 1:4, 16; Mk 12:24. (CSB)

dunamis - force (literally or figuratively); specifically miraculous *power* (usually by implication a *miracle* itself):—ability, abundance, meaning, might (- ily, -y, -y deed), (worker of) miracle (-s), power, strength, violence, mighty (wonderful) work. – Dynamite

Christ is the power of God for salvation. Jesus Christ is God incarnate, and as such he possesses all the power of God, even though he chose not to employ his power fully during his earthly life of humiliation. Rom 1:4 may be interpreted as saying that Jesus was declared to be “the Son of God with power” by his resurrection (see NIV note); it was his resurrection which proved that “all authority in heaven and on earth” had been given to him (Matt 28:18). In Rom 1:18, the Gospel is called the “power of God” which brings salvation. This is the type of power Paul is emphasizing in 1 Cor 1:22–25: not power over creation (First Article of the Creed) or brute force (God's left-hand rule of Law), but God's power to save (Second Article of the Creed). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

wisdom. See v. 30. The crucified Christ is the power that saves and the wisdom that transforms seeming folly into ultimate and highest discernment. (CSB)

Christ is also the wisdom of God. Through the foolishness of Christ crucified, “righteousness, holiness and redemption” are ours (1:30). This kind of wisdom is acquired not through human reason or strenuous intellectual exercises of the type practiced by some Greek philosophical schools, but only through simple, trusting faith in Christ crucified. It is hidden from those who are wise by the world’s standards, but “revealed to little children” (Luke 10:21). There is a rich tradition of wisdom literature in the OT. The wisdom of God revealed in the OT is incarnate in Christ. Prov 8:22–31 in particular describes the hypostasis of God’s wisdom in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

1:25 *foolishness of God* – God’s ways appear foolish to those who do not understand them (cf Is 55:8). (TLSB)

τὸ μωρὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ... τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ—Literally, “the foolish thing of God ... the weak thing of God.” Cf. the Living Bible: “This so-called ‘foolish’ plan of God.” Paul uses substantivized neuter adjectives with the article instead of the normal feminine abstract nouns for “foolishness” (μωρία) and “weakness” (ἀσθένεια). See BDF, § 263 (2). Hays explains: “This foolish and weak thing is the event of the cross itself.” (CC p. 64)

What the Greeks considered foolishness by their human standards is in fact wiser than all their philosophy and mythology, since it alone is able to make wise to salvation. Moreover, the crucified Christ, whom the Jews considered the epitome of weakness since he did not perform any powerful miracle for them, nor was he able to save himself from the cross, is really God’s power of salvation. This is a classic exposition of the theology of the cross and refutation of the theology of glory. Natural man expects to find God in visible displays of power and glory which appeal to human reason, but through this search man finds only the angry God of Law. Paradoxically, the grace of God is found only in the foolishness of a weak man crucified on a cross. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Romans 11:33-36, “³³ Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵ “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.”

1:26–31 The Corinthian Christians themselves were living proof that salvation does not depend on anything in man, so that when someone is saved, he must boast in the Lord (v. 31). (CSB)

1:26 *were wise according to worldly standards* – God works salvation through a cross and the preaching of a crucified Savior. This salvation was worked in you despite who you were! Your vocation demonstrates it! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

Paul turns the spotlight on the Corinthians themselves as Exhibit A of the wisdom of God. “*Blepete gar tēn klēsīn humōn*” invites a careful look at themselves. (*Blepete gar tēn klēsīn humōn* is explanatory.) The three groupings are representative of what humans normally boast about: *sophoi*, *dunatoi*, *eugeneis* are “the educated, the influential, the people of distinguished family” according to Hans Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975], 50). The repeated reminder “not many of you” (three times!) forces the listeners to admit they are a motley crew, humanly speaking. Who can read this without thinking of himself personally? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

If the Corinthian Christians needed evidence that the people who count in this world hold the message of the cross to be folly and weakness, they needed only to look about them. How many wise by human standards, how many influential, how many of noble birth in Corinth were members of their congregation? Not many. Erastus, the director of public works in Corinth, was one of the few. But the leading citizens in Corinth shunned this group of Christians. The men of wealth, the city fathers, the merchant princes, the scholars, the first families of the city would have nothing to do with this crazy religion a traveling Jew was peddling in Corinth. (PBC)

The pagan philosopher, Celsus, who lived in the second century after Christ, expressed the view of prominent Jews and Greeks when he wrote that a glance at the membership of Christian congregations in his day would prove that the Christians “show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.” The German philosopher Nietzsche (whom Hitler admired) condemned the Christian faith as “a favoring of the botched and degenerate, and a despising of the rich, scholarly, noble, healthy, and strong.” (PBC)

How many of the people who control the press and television in our country, how many leading entertainers, how many industrial magnates, how many noted scholars are simple, believing church-going Christians? There are some, but they are few indeed. Paul’s judgment is still true. (PBC)

Life responsibilities, vocation. (TLSB)

John 15:16 “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

Third Article – *What does this mean?* I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Not many were wise – With his “no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible,” Celsus has of course misrepresented Paul’s “not many” (1:26). (CC p. 76)

worldly standards – The mind, limited by earthly considerations, makes inappropriate judgments. (TLSB)

were powerful – *dunatoi* – powerful or those who had clout. (CSB)

Of noble birth – Though some may have acquired wealth and authority, they were not of high rank in society. (TLSB)

But the majority of converts in places like Rome and Corinth had humble origins. Many were either slaves or freed slaves (cf. 1 Cor 7:21–23). To some extent this is apparent from their

names. The lowly origin of many Christians provoked the scorn of the second-century philosopher Celsus: Their injunctions are like this: “Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly.” By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and children. (CC)

1:27-28 Look at the verbs Paul chooses to describe God’s response to human boasting: *kataischunēi* (“shame”) and *katargēsēi* (“bring to nothing”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:27 *but* – *alla* – quite to the contrary. Strongest of emphasis. (QV)

shame the strong – The foolish, weak, and despised bring down and prohibit the boasting of the wise, strong, and esteemed. (TLSB)

1:28 *despised in the world* – Worthless things, nobodies. (TLSB)

τὰ ἐξουμνημένα—ἐξουθενέω, “I despise, disdain,” equals ἐξουδενέω, “I regard as οὐδέν [nothing].” Cf. 1 Cor 6:4; 16:11. (CC p. 74)

bring to nothing – God renders something nothing, and brings from nothing something. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

1:29 Not a single bit of flesh can boast before God. You have nothing but what was given. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

God’s standards are the genuine basis of judgment. (TLSB)

God’s action is brought to bear so that not a single human being (*pasa sarx* is emphatic) may boast in himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

Romans 3:27-28 “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.²⁸ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”

1:30 *because of him ... you are in Christ*. It is God who has called you to union and communion with Christ. (CSB)

Our life, spiritual and physical, comes from God. (TLSB)

He is the reason you are in Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

The expression *ex autou* is translated “he is the source of” in the ESV and RSV, “because of him” in the NIV, “by His doing” in the NASB. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

who became to us wisdom – Paul traces from God (1) revelation given in His Word, (2) the acquittal won by His Son, (3) the holiness that follows for us, and (4) full salvation from sin and

death. “This happens because of the righteousness of another, namely, of Christ” (Ap V 184). (TLSB)

righteousness.† It is through faith in Christ that we are justified (declared righteous); see Ro 5:19. (CSB)

Paul then explains what this wisdom-treasure consists of: “righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1:30). The first part of the wisdom gift comes to us in the form of Christ’s righteousness. Jeremiah had recorded the messianic promise that the days were coming when God would raise up for David a righteous Branch called “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer 23:5–6; cf. Is 45:24). In ourselves, of course, we are sinners, but the righteousness of the spotless Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:7) has been imputed to us and covers our sins. For “God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:18, 21; Phil 3:9). (CC p. 78)

Jeremiah 23:6 “In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin^a for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

sanctification. The second part of the gift is “sanctification” or holiness (1 Cor 1:30 cf. 6:11, where again sanctification is linked to justification). God’s holiness is “an expression for His perfection of being which transcends everything creaturely” and sinful. Sinful humans cannot stand in his holy presence. But in his suprahuman love (Hos 11:8–9) God graciously provided the means—the covenant and sacrifices of the OT, and the perfect sacrifice of Christ—by which our guilt is taken away and our sin atoned for (Is 6:1–7). Holy Baptism (1 Cor 12:13) is now one of the most important means by which Christ’s holiness (ἁγιασμός, 1:30) is conveyed to us, for it is by the washing of water in the word that he sanctifies (ἁγιάζω) the church (Eph 5:26). Again, nothing is “of us” (τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν—“this is not your doing”—Eph 2:8); all is of God, in Christ Jesus. Someone else’s holiness is conferred on us. Only “in and through Christ ... Christians are ‘called to be saints’ [1 Cor 1:2] and washed clean of sin [6:11].” We are then called to live as saints. Pfitzner amplifies: “He is our sanctification in two senses. It is in and through Christ that Christians are ‘called to be saints’ and washed clean of sin. ... Again further growth in holiness can come only after the destruction of all human claims to goodness, only as the saints live the new life in Christ Jesus.” (CC p. 79)

John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

redemption. In Christ our righteousness, holiness, and redemption are a done deal. No even sanctification is my doing in any way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

1 Corinthians 1:30 “It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

1:31 *as it is written* – ἵνα καθὼς γέγραπται—Literally, “in order that as has been written.” There is an ellipsis in the clause. Paul has omitted a verb like γένηται, “in order that *it might come about* as has been written.” (CC p. 75)

let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord – All gifts in v 30 are from God; therefore, all pride in ourselves is excluded. Though Jesus’ death appears shameful and foolish, it is the only basis of our salvation. “We cannot boast of many merits and works, if they are viewed apart from grace and mercy” (SA III XIII 3). (TLSB)

Paul paraphrases Jer. 24. The larger immediate context of Jeremiah informed his entire argument regarding boasting in the wisdom and strength of man. In fact, the Jeremiah text provides the entire vocabulary of the text of St. Paul. Against Jeremiah Paul weighs the comments of his wayward brethren at Corinth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 1)

There is a proper kind of boasting! Paul spells it out with a capstone quote from Jer 9:24 (cited also in 2 Cor 10:17). Compare his own extended “boast” in 2 Cor 11:16–30. As he glories in the Lord, Paul as preacher ties the attributes of Yahweh (“kindness, justice, and righteousness”) with the saving work of Jesus (*dikaiosunē te kai hagiastosmos kai apolutrōsis*, “righteousness, holiness, and redemption”), starting his list where Jeremiah ended. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

1:18–31 We should avoid pride and boasting about anything we do for God or for others. We bring nothing but sin into our relationship with God but receive all good things from Him. • Heavenly Father, give Your people grace to recognize that all praise belongs to You alone. Amen. (TLSB)