

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9) Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9), Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture provides an analysis of Paul's introductory remarks in 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. The lecture highlights the **typical structure of ancient letters**, comparing secular examples with Paul's epistles. **Meadors emphasizes the significance of the introduction**, noting its elements like the sender, recipients, greeting, and thanksgiving. He points out how **Paul Christianizes the common Greek greeting** and uses thanksgiving to subtly introduce themes he will later address. The lecture also touches on the **meaning of key terms** such as "church" (ekklesia) and "fellowship" (koinonia) within their historical context. Finally, Meadors underscores **Paul's assertion of his apostolic authority** from the outset of the letter.

**2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).**



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3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9)

Briefing Document: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 - Paul's Epistolary Introduction

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented in Dr. Gary Meadors' Lecture 9 on Paul's epistolary introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9). Meadors focuses on the genre of New Testament letters, the specific structure and elements of this introduction, and highlights key terms and their significance in setting the stage for the rest of the epistle.

Main Themes:

- **The Nature of New Testament Letters (Epistles):** Meadors emphasizes that 1 Corinthians, like most of Paul's writings, is a letter (epistle), a genre of "occasional literature" written to specific audiences in response to particular situations and sharing a "pool of information." He stresses the importance of understanding the historical context to interpret these letters accurately: "Therefore, when we look at a letter, we remember that it is occasioned by something... we're reading one end of the telephone."
- **Greco-Roman Letter Form:** Meadors outlines the standard structure of first-century letters, including:
- **Introduction (Salutation):** Identifying the sender(s) and addressee(s), a greeting, and often a wish for good health or thanksgiving.
- **Main Body:** Containing the central content and information.
- **Conclusion (Closing):** Including greetings to others, final wishes, prayer sentences, and sometimes a date. He provides an example of a secular letter from the period to illustrate this form.
- **Paul's Christianized Salutation:** Meadors notes that while standard Greek greetings used "kairein" (greeting), and Jewish letters often used "peace" (shalom), Paul consistently uses "Grace to you and peace" (Greek: *charis* and *eirene*) in his salutations. He argues this is a conscious "Christianizing" that blends Christian and Jewish concepts: "Grace is a dominant term in imaging the Christian community... And peace. Well, that could be the Jewish side. So, we've got Christian and Jewish nomenclature coming together in the salutation that Paul gives."

- **The Significance of the Introduction in 1 Corinthians (1:1-9):** Meadors breaks down this section, highlighting key elements:
- **Identity of the Senders (1:1):** Paul identifies himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" and includes "our brother, Sosthenes." Meadors suggests Sosthenes might have been an associate or even Paul's "amanuensis" (someone who took dictation). He emphasizes that this is a "ministry community," not community authorship, and points out Paul's apostolic authority is established from the outset, potentially in anticipation of challenges later in the letter.
- **Identity of the Addressees (1:2):** "The church of God which exists in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." Meadors highlights the corporate ("church of God"), spiritual ("sanctified"), and universal ("all those in every place") identity of the recipients. He notes the repetition of "Lord" and suggests it might be an early emphasis on the Lordship of Christ, an idea some Corinthians seemed to struggle with later.
- **Salutation Proper (1:3):** "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Meadors reiterates the significance of "grace and peace" as Paul's standard greeting and notes the "divine duo" of Father and Son.
- **Statement of Thanksgiving (1:4-9):** This lengthy thanksgiving is a characteristic of Paul's introductions. Meadors outlines its structure: statement (v. 4), reason (vv. 5-7), and confidence (vv. 8-9).

Most Important Ideas and Facts:

- **Genre Matters:** Understanding that 1 Corinthians is a piece of "occasional literature" is crucial for proper interpretation. We only have "one end of the telephone" and must strive to understand the context of the original communication.
- **Pauline Salutations are Deliberate:** Paul's choice of "grace and peace" is not arbitrary but a theologically rich greeting that reflects his identity as a Jewish Christian apostle.
- **The Introduction Sets the Stage:** The opening verses of 1 Corinthians are carefully crafted to establish Paul's authority, identify the recipients, and introduce themes that will be addressed later in the letter.

- **Repetition as a Key to Meaning:** The repeated use of "Lord" in the introduction may foreshadow the importance of Christ's Lordship in the issues facing the Corinthian church.
- **Paul's Thanksgiving Highlights Areas of Later Critique:** Paul thanks God for the Corinthians' enrichment in speech and knowledge and their possession of spiritual gifts, which are the very areas where he later offers correction. This suggests Paul is being sincere in his initial appreciation while also subtly hinting at future concerns. "Paul's reason for being thankful for the Corinthians is exactly in the categories that he's going to criticize later."
- **Fellowship (Koinonia) is More Than Social:** Meadors clarifies that "fellowship" in verse 9 ("called you into the fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord") refers to a shared participation in the salvation accomplished by Christ, not merely social interaction: "The fellowship of His Son means you are called to partake in the common salvation that is ours because of Jesus Christ."
- **The "Church" (Ekklesia) as an Assembly:** The term "church" refers to a "called out group" or "assembly," reflecting the gathering of believers, likely in smaller house churches throughout Corinth.
- **Paul's Apostolic Authority is Foundational:** Paul's self-identification as a "called apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" is significant, especially considering upcoming challenges to his authority within the Corinthian church.

Quotes:

- "Therefore, when we look at a letter, we remember that it is occasioned by something... we're reading one end of the telephone."
- "Grace is a dominant term in imaging the Christian community... And peace. Well, that could be the Jewish side. So, we've got Christian and Jewish nomenclature coming together in the salutation that Paul gives."
- "Paul's reason for being thankful for the Corinthians is exactly in the categories that he's going to criticize later."
- "The fellowship of His Son means you are called to partake in the common salvation that is ours because of Jesus Christ."
- "Paul, a called apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God."

This lecture provides a foundational understanding of the epistolary genre and the specific nuances of Paul's introduction to 1 Corinthians, highlighting the deliberate choices Paul makes in setting the stage for his communication with the Corinthian believers.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9)

Study Guide: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Key Themes:

- The nature and form of New Testament letters (epistles).
- The significance of the epistolary introduction in Paul's letters.
- The specific elements and theological implications of the introduction to 1 Corinthians (sender, addressee, greeting, thanksgiving).
- Paul's purpose and approach in this initial section of the letter.
- The meaning of key terms like *epistole*, *genre*, *koinonia*, and *ekklesia*.

Review Questions:

1. What are the typical components of a first-century letter as described in the lecture?
2. How does Paul's greeting ("Grace and peace") differ from the standard Greco-Roman greeting (*kairein*) and typical Jewish greetings? What might be the significance of this difference?
3. Who are the sender and addressees identified in 1 Corinthians 1:1-2? What can we infer about their relationship and identities from this introduction?
4. What is the purpose and structure of Paul's statement of thanksgiving in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9? What does he thank God for concerning the Corinthians?
5. What is the significance of the repeated use of the title "Lord" in the introductory verses of 1 Corinthians?
6. How does the lecture explain the concept of "occasional literature" in relation to New Testament epistles? Why is understanding this concept important for interpretation?
7. Explain the distinction between the transliteration and translation of the Greek word *epistole*.
8. What does the lecturer mean by describing sanctification in 1 Corinthians 1:2 as a "forensic fact"? How does this relate to the functional aspect of sanctification?

9. Explain the meaning of the Greek word *koinonia* as it is used in 1 Corinthians 1:9. How does this differ from a common modern understanding of "fellowship"?
10. How does the introduction to Galatians differ from the typical Pauline introduction, and what is the likely effect of this difference?

Quiz: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. According to the lecture, what are the three main sections of the main body of 1 Corinthians identified by looking at passages like 1:11, 5:1, and 7:1? What indicates the organization of the section from chapter 7 to 16?
2. Explain the difference between the terms "letter" and "epistle" as they are used in the context of the New Testament. Provide the Greek word from which "epistle" is derived.
3. What does the term "genre" mean in the context of literary studies? Provide two examples of literary genres found in the Bible besides epistles.
4. Why is it important to understand that New Testament letters are "occasional literature"? What is the implication of reading "one end of the telephone conversation"?
5. Describe the typical components of the introduction (or salutation) of ancient letters, as outlined in the lecture. How does Paul's introduction to 1 Corinthians fit this pattern?
6. How does Paul Christianize the typical Greek salutation (*kairein*) in his letters? Provide the key elements of his standard greeting.
7. What does Paul thank God for concerning the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 1:4-7? What specific qualities or endowments does he mention?
8. What is the significance of the repetition of the word "Lord" in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians? What potential issue in the Corinthian church might this repetition be addressing?
9. Explain the lecturer's understanding of the term *koinonia* (fellowship) in 1 Corinthians 1:9. What does it primarily refer to in this context?
10. How does Paul establish his apostolic authority in the opening of 1 Corinthians? What phrase specifically highlights the source of his calling?

Quiz Answer Key: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

1. The three main sections of the main body of 1 Corinthians are identified in passages like 1:11, 5:1, and 7:1. The organization of the section from chapter 7 to 16 is indicated by Paul's repeated phrase, "now concerning this" or "now concerning that," as he responds to questions the Corinthians had written.
2. In the context of the New Testament, "epistle" is a more formal term for a written correspondence and is a transliteration of the Greek word *epistole*, while "letter" is the translation of that same Greek word. Thus, when referring to New Testament writings, "epistle" is the traditional term used.
3. "Genre" refers to a kind or category of literature with specific forms, styles, and content. Examples of biblical genres besides epistles include poetry (e.g., Psalms), proverbs, narrative (e.g., Gospels), apocalyptic (e.g., Revelation), and gospel.
4. Understanding that New Testament letters are "occasional literature" is crucial because they were written in response to specific situations, questions, or issues faced by the original recipients. This means we are only reading one side of a conversation, and we need to understand the original context to interpret the meaning accurately.
5. Typical components of ancient letter introductions included identification of the sender(s) and addressee(s), a statement of greeting (often a wish for good health), and sometimes a statement of thanksgiving. Paul's introduction to 1 Corinthians follows this pattern by identifying himself and Sosthenes as senders and the church in Corinth as the addressee, offering a greeting of grace and peace, and including a lengthy statement of thanksgiving.
6. Paul Christianizes the typical Greek salutation *kairain* by replacing it with "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This greeting incorporates key Christian concepts and blends both Jewish (peace/shalom) and distinctively Christian (grace) elements.
7. In 1 Corinthians 1:4-7, Paul thanks God for the grace given to the Corinthians in Christ Jesus, which has enriched them in every way, including in speech and knowledge. He also acknowledges that God has confirmed the testimony about Christ among them, resulting in them not lacking any spiritual gift as they eagerly await the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The repetition of the word "Lord" in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians emphasizes the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This repetition may be a way for Paul to

subtly address a potential lack of submission to Christ's authority within the Corinthian church, anticipating later corrections he will make.

9. The lecturer explains that *koinonia* in 1 Corinthians 1:9, translated as fellowship, primarily means something shared in common, specifically the common salvation that believers partake in because of Jesus Christ. It refers to sharing in what Jesus accomplished as the Son of God, such as redemption and eternal life, rather than primarily a social connection.
10. Paul establishes his apostolic authority in the opening of 1 Corinthians by identifying himself as "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God." This phrase emphasizes that his apostleship is not self-appointed but divinely ordained by God's sovereign will.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze the structure and purpose of Paul's epistolary introduction in 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. How does each component (sender/addressee identification, greeting, thanksgiving) contribute to the overall message and tone he establishes at the beginning of the letter?
2. Discuss the significance of Paul's modification of the standard Greco-Roman greeting (*kairēin*) in his letters. What theological implications can be drawn from his use of "grace and peace"? Consider the potential Jewish and Christian influences on this formulation.
3. Examine Paul's statement of thanksgiving in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9. What does he commend the Corinthians for, and how might these very areas become points of correction or concern later in the letter? What does this reveal about Paul's rhetorical strategy?
4. Explore the meaning and implications of the term *koinonia* (fellowship) as presented in the lecture, particularly in the context of 1 Corinthians 1:9. How does this understanding of fellowship challenge or expand upon common contemporary interpretations of the term within Christian communities?
5. Compare and contrast the function and significance of the epistolary introduction in Paul's letter to the Galatians with that of 1 Corinthians. What does the absence of typical elements in Galatians reveal about Paul's immediate concerns and the nature of his relationship with the Galatian churches?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Epistle:** A letter, particularly a formal or public one. In the New Testament, this term is traditionally used to refer to the letters written by apostles and other early Christian leaders. It is a transliteration of the Greek word *epistole*.
- **Genre:** A category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter. Understanding the genre of a biblical text is crucial for proper interpretation.
- **Occasional Literature:** Writings that are produced in response to a specific occasion, situation, or need. New Testament epistles are considered occasional literature because they were written to address particular issues faced by specific churches or individuals.
- **Salutation:** A formal greeting at the beginning of a letter or other written communication. In ancient letters, this often included identification of the sender and recipient and a wish for the recipient's well-being.
- **Prescript:** The opening of a letter, which typically includes the names of the sender and recipient(s) and a greeting.
- **Amanuensis:** A secretary or scribe who writes down what another person dictates. Some scholars believe Paul may have used amanuenses for his letters.
- **Forensic (in theological context):** Relating to or denoting a legal or judicial aspect. In the context of sanctification, it refers to the declared, legal standing of believers as holy in Christ.
- **Functional (in theological context):** Relating to the practical outworking or living out of one's faith and calling. In the context of sanctification, it refers to the ongoing process of becoming holy in one's behavior and character.
- **Koinonia (κοινωνία):** A Greek word commonly translated as "fellowship," "sharing," "participation," or "communion." In the New Testament, it often refers to a shared life in Christ, participation in the Holy Spirit, and a common sharing of spiritual blessings.
- **Ekklesia (ἐκκλησία):** A Greek word commonly translated as "church." It literally means "a called-out assembly" and was used in the ancient world for various gatherings of people. In the New Testament, it refers to the assembly of God's people, both locally and universally.

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 9, Paul's Epistolary Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9), Biblicalelearning.org

Frequently Asked Questions on Paul's Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1:1-9)

1. Why is it important to understand the genre of a New Testament letter like 1 Corinthians?

Understanding the genre of a New Testament letter, or epistle, is crucial because it is "occasional literature." These letters were written by a specific author to a specific audience in response to particular situations, questions, or issues they were facing. Recognizing this helps us to avoid taking the words out of their original context and applying them inappropriately to our own modern circumstances. We only have "one end of the telephone conversation," so understanding the likely context and the shared pool of information between Paul and the Corinthians is vital for accurate interpretation.

2. What are the typical components of a first-century letter as seen in Paul's epistles?

A typical first-century letter, which Paul follows in 1 Corinthians, generally consisted of three main parts: the introduction (or salutation/prescript), the main body, and the conclusion (or closing). The introduction typically identifies the sender and recipient(s), includes a greeting, and often a wish for good health or, in Paul's case, a statement of thanksgiving about the recipients. The main body contains the central content and information. The conclusion usually includes greetings to others, final wishes or prayers, and sometimes dating (though the apostles rarely included dates).

3. How does Paul adapt the standard Greco-Roman letter greeting in his opening to 1 Corinthians?

While standard Greco-Roman letters often used the greeting "kairein" (greetings), Paul consistently Christianizes his salutations. In 1 Corinthians 1:3, he uses "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This combines a uniquely Christian element ("grace," *charis*) with a common Jewish concept of well-being ("peace," *eirene* or *shalom*). This dual greeting, coupled with the mention of both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, sets a distinctively theological tone right from the beginning of his letters.

4. Who are identified as the senders in 1 Corinthians 1:1, and what does this tell us?

The senders identified are "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes." This indicates that while Paul is the primary author and emphasizes his divine calling and apostolic authority (especially important given later challenges to it in the letter), he includes Sosthenes as a co-sender. This suggests a ministry community around Paul and possibly indicates Sosthenes served as an associate or even an amanuensis (someone who took dictation). It highlights Paul's approach to ministry as often collaborative.

5. Who are the recipients of this letter, and how are they described in the introduction?

The letter is addressed "To the church of God which exists in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those in every place who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours." This describes the recipients in several ways: as the "church of God" (emphasizing their belonging to God), as "sanctified in Christ Jesus" (set apart for holiness, a forensic reality of their being in Christ), and as "called to be saints" (indicating their ongoing functional call to holy living). The broader address includes all believers who call on the Lord Jesus Christ, highlighting the universality of Christ's Lordship.

6. What is the significance of Paul's statement of thanksgiving in 1 Corinthians 1:4-9?

Paul's lengthy statement of thanksgiving is a typical feature of his epistolary introductions. In 1 Corinthians, he expresses thanks to God for the grace given to the Corinthians in Christ Jesus, for their enrichment in speech and knowledge, and for their possession of spiritual gifts. Interestingly, the very areas Paul praises them for (speech, knowledge, spiritual gifts) are later topics where he addresses problems and provides correction within the letter. This initial affirmation may serve to gain their attention and goodwill, acknowledging the positive aspects of their community before addressing their shortcomings.

7. Why does Paul repeatedly use the title "Lord" in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians?

The repetition of the title "Lord" (referring to Jesus Christ) in the introduction (verses 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9) is significant. While divine name repetition can occur in salutations, its frequency in this passage suggests Paul may be emphasizing the Lordship of Christ for the Corinthian believers. Later in the epistle, issues of submission to Christ's authority and divisions within the church indicate that they may not have fully embraced Jesus as their Lord in practice. Therefore, this repetition early on could be Paul's way of underscoring this fundamental aspect of their faith.

8. What does the term "fellowship" (*koinonia*) mean in 1 Corinthians 1:9, and why is it important?

The word "fellowship" translates the Greek term *koinonia*, which fundamentally means "something shared in common." In 1 Corinthians 1:9, where Paul states that God is faithful and has called them into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, it refers to their participation in the common salvation and eternal life made possible through Jesus's work. It is not primarily about social gatherings or casual interaction, but rather the deep, shared reality of redemption and their common identity in Christ. This concept of shared life in Christ is a foundational aspect of Christian unity and understanding their relationship with God and one another.