

## 1 Cor 1.1-9 Living in tension

Corinth is a city in Greece. In Paul's day it was a major seaport and the equivalent of New York, Los Angeles and Las Vegas all rolled into one.

Paul is responding to a letter from Corinth and a personal report. The two sources give different pictures of the church in Corinth.

### Tension between our public face and our private struggles

We want to spin our image so people think that we're successful, that we have it all together, that we're in control of our lives, even if the reality is something very different.

Paul knows that the Corinthians have issues, but he begins, not with their issues, but with their identity.

### Tension between who we are and who we're called to be

#### Our identity lies in what we're called

Paul knows who he is... *"Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..."*

But, whether we like it or not, the way that we are known is through the name that someone else gave us.

Calling, naming things, is so important that it was the first thing God had Adam do in Genesis.

#### We are called by God

And he wants the Corinthians to remember who they are. He calls them *...the church of God in Corinth...*

The Greek word that we translate as "church" is *ekklesia*, which has at its core the Greek word "to call" and means any kind of assembly that has been called together.

We are God's assembly. Wentworth Baptist is not your church, or my church, it's God's church. We are what we are by God's grace, because he has called us to himself and, in the process, called us to walk with each other. That is at the core of who we are.

#### We are called to be holy

But that isn't all. Paul goes on to call them *...those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy,*

"Sanctified" means "made holy," and "holy" means, "set apart," "special."

So, when Paul tells them later in the letter that certain behaviour is wrong, he's not telling them that because he wants to lay a guilt trip on them. He's simply telling them that that's not what they're meant for.

We're set apart for God and called to be special to him.

#### We are called blameless

Paul doesn't give up on the Corinthians. He still believes in them and believes that they'll win out in the end, because of who it is that has called them. <sup>8</sup> *He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

That word translated "blameless" means "you will not be called to account." When you stand before God, you won't be called "guilty," because *He will keep you strong to the end.*

#### Because God has called us to himself

And we can rely upon that because, <sup>9</sup> *God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*