

Paul And Sosthenes

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:1f).

"And Sosthenes our brother." Sosthenes is one of three men whom Paul includes in his salutations in the various letters he wrote, the other two being Silas (1 and 2 Thessalonians) and Timothy (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon). Only one other time is the name *"Sosthenes"* found in the New Testament. There was a ruler of the synagogue in Corinth who was beaten by a Gentile crowd after Jews had tried to enlist aid from Gallio the proconsul of Achaia to drive Paul from Corinth or worse, to punish him severely. They failed in that attempt (Acts 18:12-17). There is no way to ascertain that the Sosthenes of Acts 18 and the Sosthenes Paul joins with himself in addressing these brethren are the same. Some suppose this Sosthenes is the man who actually wrote the letter. Such is possible, for on one occasion one who was Paul's stenographer personally saluted the brethren the letter was addressed to: Tertius (Romans 16:22). Others suppose that the Sosthenes of Acts 18 is the same as the Sosthenes of this letter; that through the interval of time he came to believe and obey the gospel and, having now come to Corinth, is included in the salutation. Circumstantial evidence might lend some merit to this latter theory: he is called *"our brother,"* the brother of both Paul and Corinthians, perhaps a subtle reminder that while Paul was in Corinth, Sosthenes had opposed him but the gospel's power was not lost on him; he, being an honest and sincere man, had surrendered to the Lord, becoming his disciple. This would be wonderful if it were the actual truth of this matter, but there is no way to know certainly.

"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth." We will do well to remember that as the letter unfolds and the ills of these brethren come to light, that despite all their problems, they were the church of God. They were the temple of God and their bodies were temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19f). The expression *"Church of God"* was not called upon these brethren as a personal noun; the term was used to show possession. The Corinthian church belonged to God. The church is God's people; His possession, the sheep of His pasture.

There are various phrases which show the truth that the church is the possession of God. Later Paul will remind these brethren, *"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price"* (1 Cor. 6:19). Peter said, of the brethren to whom he wrote, they were *"a people for God's own possession."* The Ephesian elders were urged to take heed to the *"church of God which he*

purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). In this sense the church is called the "*church of Christ*" and "*the church of God in Christ Jesus*" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Thess. 2:14). The well remembered words of Jesus to Peter: "*Upon this rock I will build my church,*" further establishes this point (Mt. 16:18). When the apostle addresses the partyism among Corinthian brethren when brethren there were saying, "*I am of Paul ... Apollos ... Cephas ... Christ,*" we will do well to remember this had been allowed to occur because the brethren had forgotten that no matter how much we may esteem one who has either introduced us to the gospel, or greatly aided our spiritual understanding; he/she is just a human, an earthen vessel, a minister who acted as a servant in sharing the gospel of Christ to us but to whom the church does not belong; it belongs to Christ!

May we never forget that we belong to God; purchased by His blood. Remembering that will help us to seek at all times to conduct ourselves in such a way that our Savior is glorified in us.

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