

## The Joy of Holiness 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

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

Paul uses the word 'saints' over 60 times in his epistles. Despite what Paul knows about them, he opens his letter to them as 'saints' along with everyone else. It is evident from Paul's opening words that he thinks the Corinthians have indeed been powerfully converted. And he will continue to appeal to their salvation as the basis for their sanctification.

*1:2 - To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints*

**8:5-6** - *For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— <sup>6</sup> yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*

What an encouraging tone. He begins with the letter with hope during what appears to be a hopeless situation.

Paul's point is encouragement to live holy. He knows his readers can do this because they are holy. This is true of all of God's commands. They are grounded in his enabling grace.

Indicative: You are

Imperative: You ought

John 8:11 – Indicative – *Neither do I condemn you...*

Imperative – *Go, and from now on sin no more.*

T - **Colossians 3:1-5 & 12**

Indicative – 3:1 - *If then you have been raised with Christ....*

Imperative - *Set your minds on things that are above*

Indicative – 3:3 – *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Imperative – 3:5 – *Put to death therefore...*

3:12 – *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved....*

In the first 9 verses, Paul sets the foundation what he will tell the Corinthians to do

1 – 1-3 – *You are saints/holy* - Ground

2 – 4-9 – *You are blessed* – Goal

- The imperative without or before the indicative is moralism and failure. You can't work your way into God's grace or salvation.
- The indicative (You are) and then the imperative (You ought) is Christianity.

This two-fold reality makes our struggle joyful. We are not what we were but we are not yet what we will be. Just as God's kingdom is 'now' within you but 'not yet' within the whole world, so we rejoice in the change and hope for more of it.

### **First: God's Grace and Our Testimony. 4 & 6**

For Paul, grace is neither impotent or invisible. It is powerful and visible.

a) Grace. 4

1 - *Was given* = aorist = past tense

2 - *Grace* = *charis* = favor / undeserved & unrepayable kindness or mercy

All of life and all of Christianity is built on God's (no-adjective) grace. No adjective can make grace greater than it is.

Look what grace does:

- a) It enriches you. 5
- b) It confirms you. 6
- c) It gifts you. 7
- d) It sustains you. 8a
- e) It frees you. 8b
- f) It includes you 9

How do we obtain such grace?

4 - *...the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus.*

b) A Confirmed Testimony. 6

*Testimony = marturion = witness = martyr*

1:4 – Divine scene

1:6 – Human scene

We see this in many places in Scripture –

**Deuteronomy 1:8 - *Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore to your fathers...***

**Joshua 1:2b-3 - Now therefore *arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup>Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you...***

**2 Timothy 2:7 - *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.***

The Corinthians' testimony was confirmed in the same way it was given, by grace.

**Saving Grace: God's Righteousness at Christ's Expense**

**Sanctifying Grace: God's Riches as Christ Enables**

How was it confirmed?

## **Second: Confirmation and our Testimony. 5-9**

Look what grace does:

### **1. It enriches you. 5**

- Speech – Paul later criticizes their use of speech as self-assertive & combative
- Knowledge – 9t in 1 Cor + 6t in 2 Cor = 15t / only 12t in the rest of Paul's letters

How are speech and knowledge tied together? Being stewards of knowledge is one of the great Christian responsibilities.

- We are commanded to share the Gospel.
- How do we handle what we know that could hurt someone or help someone?

**1 Corinthians 13:1-2 - *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.***

What to say, when to say and how to say something is a real gift.

**Proverbs 25:11 - *A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.***

## 2. It confirms you. 6

### 3. It gifts you. 7a. 'charisma' / Paul will discuss this in detail in 12-14.

**4:7** - *What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?*

**14:12** - *...since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.*

### 4. It excites you. 7b – 'wait' = 'waiting eagerly' –

- eschatology is ethical –

**1 John 3:2-3** - *Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*

- Being heavenly minded makes you of earthly good
- Heaven is a motivation, not just a destination

We are like people who step out of cold room into a warm one. Both warmth and cold are present. We are in a warm room, but it takes time for our bodies to catch up to the temperature around us and some parts of our bodies take longer to warm than others.

The classic metaphor is the difference between 'D' day, the winning of a decisive battle and 'V' day, the day the war ends. The decisive moment of salvation has taken place and we are moving forward in God's eschaton. The effects of the Fall are receding but not yet behind us.

### 5. It sustains you. 8a = 'lay a foundation.' Jesus is God's sure foundation –

**2 Timothy 2:19** - *God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."*

From beginning to end, "*God is faithful*" (v 9). He completes what he begins (Phil 1:6). The correct term for assurance of salvation is not so much the 'perseverance of the saints' as the 'preservation of the saints.' We persevere because we are preserved.

### 6. It frees you. 8b

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** - *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

## 7. It includes you. 9

FOMO (fear of missing out) is not for Christians. This is one of the Corinthians' great problems. In Christ, we are all equally (though differently) in everything God is doing.

8. It is not about you. 8 – “the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ –
- ‘revealing’ = apocalypse = revelation
  - This keeps our Christianity, our church, from being all about us

Notice again that we are passive in each of these. This is what God has done, is doing and will do.

From beginning to end, “God is faithful” (v 9). He completes what he begins (Phil 1:6). The correct term for assurance of salvation is not so much the ‘perseverance of the saints’ as the ‘preservation of the saints.’ We persevere because we are preserved.

**Conclusion:** Throughout history humans have thought of special places (temples) and special people (priests) and special days (holy days) as sacred. But you are all of those 24/7.

The challenge is for the Corinthians to be what Paul sees, a ‘blameless’ people (1:8).

The trial is hard but there is joy because holiness possesses its own inherent joy, as we strive to

*Ephesians 4:1 - ... walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called*

## Community Groups:

- 1 – Read the text of 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.
- 2 – What do you think of when you hear the word, ‘saint?’
- 3 – What is the biblical definition of the word?
- 4 – What is the indicative mean?
- 5 – What does the imperative mean?
- 6 – How do they work together?
- 7 – What is the problem in putting the imperative before the indicative?
- 8 – How do we receive grace?
- 9 – Explain ‘God’s righteousness at Christ’s expense.’
- 10 – Explain ‘God’s riches as Christ enables.’
- 11 – In this text, briefly state what grace does for us in verses 5-9.
- 12 – How does the text say we are enriched?
- 13 – What are your spiritual gifts?
- 14 – What does it mean that ‘eschatology is ethical’
- 15 – How are we sustained in Christ?
- 16 – What makes us ‘guiltless’ before God?
- 17 – How might Ephesians 4:1 summarize Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians?