

PAUL'S PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Introduction:

1. In this message we will continue to study the Apostle Paul's opening remarks/salutation. He writes to the church in Corinth, highlighting their privileged position and thanking God for what He had done in their lives.
2. Paul starts the Epistle by drawing their attention to their privileged position in Christ before he begins reproving them for their carnality. Knowing one's position in Christ is a great antidote to carnality. Paul mentions God and Christ 15 times in Vs. 1-9. He is turning their focus heavenward!
3. Thanksgiving is a constant thread in Paul's Epistles. He even had cause for thanksgiving with a carnal church like the Corinthian church. That did not mean he condoned their carnality as he is going to confront it boldly in the letter but thanks God nonetheless. When dealing with church problems, maintaining a spirit of thanksgiving will help keep our hearts from going sour and bitter.
4. We will divide the Apostle's prayer of thanksgiving into **three parts** for our exposition.

Paul gives thanks for:

I. GOD'S GRACIOUSNESS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (VS. 4)

A. The Giver of Grace – "grace of God"

1. Grace finds its source in the heart of the Eternal God. It is a part of His nature to show kindness, benevolence and favor to us as sinful creatures. God is called "the God of all grace" in 1 Peter 5:10. Thank God for grace!
2. Grace is God's unmerited, undeserved favor. It is God giving us what we don't deserve. This glorious word χάρις appears 156 times in the New Testament. It is translated "favour" (Lk. 1:30, 2:52, Acs 2:47, 7:10, 46, 25:3), "gracious" (Lk. 4:22), "thank(s)" (Lk. 6:32, 33, 34, 2 Cor. 8:16) & "gift" (2 Cor. 8:4). Paul uses the word 110 times, more than all the other New Testament writers put together.
 - a. Mercy is not giving us what we deserve (withholding judgment).
 - b. Grace is giving us what we don't deserve.
 - c. Illustration: Mercy would be letting the thief go free without punishment. Grace would be giving the thief a place to stay and money for expenses.
 - d. Micah 7:18-19 "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his

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heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

- e. Ephesians 2:4-5 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”

B. The Gift of Grace – “which is given you”

These words attached to the phrase “grace of God” further highlight the heart of grace. Grace is a gift! By its very nature, it cannot be earned. It must be received.

1. There’s the Gift of Salvation Grace – the word “given” is Aorist, Passive, Participle. The Corinthians had been recipients of God’s grace in salvation in the past. Have you received God’s salvation gift?
 - a. Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
 - b. Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
 - c. Think of what the grace of God had done for the Corinthian believers. Many had been saved out of lives of dark depravity. “A man could not walk a city block in the seamier sections of town without being propositioned by a pimp or a prostitute, or else accosted by some horrifying painted pervert who had Sodom itself for sale. Then, too, there was the world-famous temple of Venus Pandemos, home of a Phoenician sex cult, which did a roaring trade night and day. Sin was for sale on a massive scale in that temple. Its priests wholesaled lust and vice, in the name of religion, to those who were willing to buy.” (Phillips)
 - d. **Thank God for salvation grace!**
2. There’s the Gifts of Sanctification Grace – the demonstrative pronoun “That” in verse 5 reveals that Paul was not just thinking about how grace had saved them but how grace had operated in their lives since their salvation.
 - a. “He refers here, not merely to that grace that brought salvation, but to the fuller operations of grace in the early life of the assembly, as mentioned in what follows.” (Vines)
 - b. We are saved by grace and sanctified by grace. Grace equips, empowers, enables and energises us for the Christian life. 2 Cor. 9:8 “And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you;

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that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work.”

c. Thank God for sanctifying grace!

C. The Mediator of Grace – “by Jesus Christ”

1. Grace can only be known and experienced through Christ. 1 Timothy 2:5 “For *there is* one God, and **one mediator** between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus;**”
2. Outside of Christ there is no salvation grace! (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). There is no grace in “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4) or in “another gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4, Gal. 1:6). There is only salvation in the biblical Jesus and He is “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). He is the sinless, virgin born, eternal Son of God. He is Lord and Christ.
3. Outside of Christ there is no sanctification grace! 1 Corinthians 1:30 “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and **sanctification**, and redemption.” Jesus Christ is our salvation and our sanctification!

II. GOD’S GENEROUSNESS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (VS. 5-8)

Look at what God’s grace and done in and for the Corinthian believers. They had been:

A. Enriched by Christ (Vs. 5-7)

God had endowed the Corinthian believers with spiritual gifts. The problem in the Corinthian church was not the gifts themselves but the abuse and misuse of those gifts. Spiritual gifts are wonderful but they need to be exercised in a spiritual rather than a carnal manner. The Corinthian church was:

1. A Talented Church (Vs. 5, 7a)

The word ‘enriched’ means “to make rich”. They had been made rich spiritually by God’s grace. Truly we have been enriched in Christ with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). Take note of:

a. The specifics of their enrichment (Vs. 5)

- i. Utterance – the Greek word is ‘logos’, referring to speech. The Corinthian church was gifted in this area but they needed to exercise the speech gifts within the boundaries of Apostolic rule and in a spiritual manner. “Utterance” refers to proclaiming the Word of God. It refers to the revelatory gifts of prophesying and tongues. These ceased with the completion of the Bible canon, but the gifts of preaching and teaching and exhorting remain.” (Cloud)

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- ii. Knowledge – they had understanding of God’s Word. They had a good understanding of certain things such as the issue of food offered to idols (8:1). But Paul had to correct them for being puffed up over their knowledge and failing to consider the weaker brother.
 - iii. “In their communication of the truth (“utterance”) and in their grasp of the truth (“knowledge), they had been especially blessed.” (Gromacki)
 - iv. The word Paul uses here for ‘gift’ is akin to the world ‘grace’ (charisma). It actually means “a gift of grace, a free gift”.
- b. The source of their enrichment (Vs. 5b). These gifts are “by Him”. All spiritual gifts are from God. They are not natural and cannot be worked up or learned or obtained through any natural human means.
- c. The scope of their enrichment (Vs. 7a) The phrase “come behind” means “to lack”. The Corinthian church was not lacking in spiritual gifts; they were lacking in spiritual maturity!
- d. Challenge: The fact you possess gifts and talents does NOT mean you are automatically a spiritual individual.
2. A Testifying Church (Vs. 6)
- The operation of God’s grace in their lives enabled them to bear witness to Christ as a church.
- a. They testified with their lips – the word ‘testimony’ means ‘witness’. Their lips bore testimony concerning Christ’s work of grace in their lives. The testimony of Christ is the Gospel. Acts 4:33 “And with great power gave the apostles **witness** (same word) of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” John Gill writes, “By "the testimony of Christ" is meant the Gospel of Christ, which bears a testimony to his deity, his incarnation, his obedience, sufferings, and death, his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at God's right hand, and intercession for the saints; to redemption by his blood, justification by his righteousness, pardon and atonement of sin by his sacrifice, and complete salvation by his obedience and death. This, as it had been preached to the Corinthians, was confirmed and established among them, by the signs and miracles with which it was attended; by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, particularly of prophecy bestowed on many of them; and by the internal power and energy of the Spirit, accompanying and applying it to their souls.”
 - b. They testified with their lives – “confirmed in you”. The word ‘confirmed’ is also translated ‘established’. For example,

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“Rooted and built up in him, and **stablished** in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” (Col. 2:7) It was confirmed “in you”, that is in their hearts and through them collectively as a church. True salvation has evidence (2 Cor. 5:17). The effects being wrought in changed lives validated the message.

3. A Trusting Church (Vs. 7b)

The operation of the grace of God in the Corinthian believers had also produced an expectant, patient waiting for Christ's return. They were eagerly waiting and watching for Christ's coming.

- a. Patient waiting – the word means “assiduously and patiently waiting for” (Strong)
- b. Expectant waiting – the word also contains the sense of “to look for”. The same Greek word is translated “look for” in the following two Scriptures:
 - i. Philippians 3:20 “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we **look for** the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”
 - ii. Hebrews 9:28 “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that **look for** him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”
- c. Barnes: “Expecting, or looking for this coming with glad and anxious desire. This was, certainly, one of the endowments to which he referred, to wit, that they had grace given them earnestly to desire, and to wait for the second appearing of the Lord Jesus.”
- d. A.T. Robertson: “It is an eager expectancy of the second coming of Christ.”
- e. Challenge: Are you eagerly looking for Christ's return? God's grace working in your life can produce that expectancy.

B. Established by Christ (Vs. 8)

This church was secure in Christ!

1. The Person of our Security – “Who shall also confirm you” (Vs. 8a). ‘Who’ points back to “our Lord Jesus Christ” in the previous verse. Christ is the one who saves us and He is the one who establishes, preserves and keeps us. The word ‘confirm’ is the same word as ‘confirmed’ in verse 6. “Confirm” is the Greek ‘bebaioo’, “sure, fixed, to make firm, fulfill” (Complete Word Study Bible), “to make stable, to make stand” (RWP). It is also translated “establish” (2 Cor. 1:21; Col. 2:7). Christ would establish (make firm) and preserve them until His return.
 - a. Php. 1:6 “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ:”

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- b. Jude 1:24 “Now unto him that is **able** to **keep you** from falling, and to **present you faultless** before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” Christ is able to keep you and present you!
 - c. 1 Peter 1:5 “Who are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
 - d. 1 Thess. 5:23-24 “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.**”
2. The Period of our Security – “unto the end” (Vs. 8b) “End of the age till Jesus comes, final preservation of the saints.” (RWP) God’s grace saved you and God’s grace will keep you throughout the entirety of life’s journey and on into eternity. Look to Christ! Trust Christ!
3. The Perfection of our Security – “that ye may be blameless” (Vs. 8c). The word means ‘unreprovable’ (Col. 1:22).
- a. The word “denotes those against whom there is no charge of crime; who are unaccused, and against whom there is no ground of accusation.” (Barnes)
 - b. “Blameless” is ‘anegketos’, from ‘a’ (without) and ‘egkaleo’ (to accuse in court). It means unimpeachable, free from any legal charge. (Cloud)
 - c. “Paul was also thankful that God would confirm or guarantee the unblameable position of the Corinthians until Christ’s return. The term ‘blameless’ is a legal term. No charge of condemnation nor sentencing to eternal death would ever be brought against them in the court of Divine justice.” (Gromacki)
 - d. This is our position in Christ. A blameless life is also something that God is working in us as a part of the process of sanctification. A faultless life is not possible as a Christian but a blameless life is. This is one of the key qualifications of the pastorate (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6-7)

III. GOD’S GOODNESS TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH (VS. 9)

Paul had given thanks for God’s grace and their gifts; now he gives thanks for their God. “In the face of Corinthian unfaithfulness, Paul was thankful for God’s faithfulness.” (Gromacki)

A. The Faithfulness of the Father (Vs. 9a)

- 1. God is faithful – what an awesome statement! Faithfulness is one of the glorious attributes of God. God is completely trustworthy and dependable. He never fails. He always keeps His promises. He never changes.

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- a. God is faithful in His Person – Psalm 36:5 “Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.”
 - b. God is faithful to His Precepts
 - i. Psalm 119:138 “Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and **very faithful.**”
 - ii. Isaiah 25:1 “O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are **faithfulness** and **truth.**”
 - iii. Titus 1:9 “Holding fast **the faithful word** as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.”
 - c. God is faithful to His Promises – Deuteronomy 7:9 “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, **the faithful God**, which **keepeth covenant and mercy** with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;”
 - d. “Sooner could the sun cease to shine and the stars be blotted out and the earth cease to rotate than God could be untrue to His own character. He is faithful.” (Phillips)
2. God is faithful – what an assuring statement! God is always faithful to His children. Lamentations 3:22-25 “*It is* of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. *They are new* every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness. The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.”

B. The Fellowship of the Son (Vs. 9b)

1. The Invitation to this Fellowship – “by whom ye were **called** unto the fellowship”. We were called by God into fellowship with His Son. We are called to come to Christ in salvation. We are called to abide in Christ for sanctification.
2. The Intimacy of this Fellowship – “unto the **fellowship of his Son** Jesus Christ our Lord”. (See also 1 John 1:3) We experience Christ’s fellowship:
 - a. In our individual Christian lives – “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27)
 - b. In our collective Church life – Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, **there am I in the midst** of them.” Christ stands in the midst of His candlesticks (Rev. 1:12-13) and walks in the midst of His candlesticks (Rev. 2:1). There is a special manifestation of the presence of Christ that can **ONLY** be experienced in the fellowship life of the local church. When you miss church, you miss meeting with Christ.

Conclusion: Have you received God’s grace gift of salvation? Are we a thankful people? Are we relying on Christ for our sanctification?