

**Text:** 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

**Title:** Thanks for the Corinthian Believers

**Truth:** God's gifts call forth our thanksgiving to Him.

**Date/Location:** Sunday January 19, 2020 at FBC

## Introduction

As with most of Paul's letters, this one opens with a greeting (1:1-3) followed by a thanksgiving (1:4-9). The giving of thanks is the high-level and controlling idea of the passage.

Note the pattern of the thanksgiving prayer. It has five parts:

1. The subject and verb, "I give thanks."
2. The direct object, the recipient of the thanksgiving, "to God."
3. The adverb, indicating consistency of thanksgiving, "always."
4. The adverbial phrase indicating the recipients, "for you."
5. The reasons for the thanksgiving are then listed. This listing basically takes up the rest of the paragraph.

We could outline the passage using headings past, present, and future. See if *you* can put the verses into groupings under those headings.

I outline the passage differently, based on the various manifestations of God's grace mentioned by the apostle and for which he gives thanks.

### I. Thanks for grace given, v. 4

- A. Paul expresses gratitude for the overarching gift of God's grace. Included in this is everything that God gives to the believer, as with all of the following categories (II through VI).
- B. His favor is always given, never earned. It is unmerited and is the opposite of a wage or recompense. This is why salvation cannot be procured by works.
- C. At this point we should take note that *all* of the things for which Paul is thankful come from God. None of this is man's work. Look at each part of the passage and see this. To recognize this fact is the proper starting point for a church. It is the antidote to pride in our lives when we recognize that salvation is *all* of God, and all of grace. It leads us to give thanks instead of complain. Getting our eyes off of this truth will result in problems like they had in Corinth, with man-centered divisions, man-centered theology, man-centered use of spiritual gifts, etc.

- D. If we find ourselves grumbling about something or someone in our hearts, STOP! Instead, think of several reasons to give thanks to God in that something or about that someone. And then give thanks to God!

## II. Thanks for life shared, v. 9

- A. Under this heading, I am actually referring to the end of the section in verse 9 where Paul says that believers are “called into the fellowship of His Son...” The word *fellowship* is *koinonia*, and is particularly interesting for us at *Fellowship Bible Church*. It refers to sharing or partnership in something. In the case of the Christian faith, it is sharing in the eternal life provided by Jesus through His death and resurrection. We partake of that life in Christ. God called us into *that* fellowship, so that we are intimately linked with Jesus Christ.
- B. Fellowship does not refer to the believer’s harmonious present relationship with the Lord, as if a believer can be “in” or “out” of fellowship at various times in his Christian life. Rather, it refers to the sharing of life with Christ. To be “in” fellowship is to be saved; to be “out” of fellowship is to be unsaved. The *entire* book of 1 John, including chapter 1, addresses this concept. To have fellowship with God and Christ, in John’s mind, means to be saved. If you say that you have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, then you don’t have fellowship at all, meaning you are unsaved (1 John 1:6).
- C. I don’t believe the other idea of *fellowship* should use that word—since the Bible doesn’t use it that way. A better way to express it is this: are you walking in obedience to Christ right now, or are you walking in sin? And while expressing it that way, recognize that there are gradations or levels. A believer may be walking in some level of disobedience and some level of obedience, never all in one or the other category. This has to do with maturity and the influence of God’s Spirit in your life. It is not a simple “binary” “in or out” kind of thing.

## III. Thanks for enrichment in everything, v. 5, 7

- A. I combine verses 5 and 7 under this heading. Verse 5 speaks of the believers being enriched in all utterance and knowledge. Verse 7 speaks of them coming short in no gift. I understand the ideas to be overlapping.
- B. This includes what we know as “spiritual gifts,” including such things as are not still given today, such as the gift of prophecy, knowledge, and tongues. Utterance and knowledge may be a little vague to you, but they are all related to the word of Christ.

- C. But it is not limited to those gifts. It includes God's "enriching work" which touches everything in the believer's life and the church's life. We were poor, but Christ became poor in order to make us rich.
- D. Furthermore, the church "comes short" in no gift. This does not mean that the church necessarily has every possible spiritual gift. But they have every one that God deems necessary for them at their time in their context. They need nothing more to successfully live for God and minister for God. Let's put that into our context. What God gives you is the measure of what He believes you need and can handle at present. If He gives this church \$X in offerings, that is what He has decided is the measure of our need. That is everything we need. God has given this church X in spiritual gifts, one or more in each and every believer who is here. That is what we need to live and minister. Nothing more. But also, nothing less!

#### **IV. Thanks for testimony confirmed, v. 6**

- A. This backs us up to verse 6. What does it mean when it says, "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you"? First, note that the testimony of Christ is the gospel and its associated truths.
- B. We might think that it means "you confirmed your belief in the gospel." But the whole passage refers to the work of God in the passive verbs. He did the giving of grace, He did the enriching, He did the gifting, He will confirm us to the end, etc. So here, **God** confirmed the testimony of Christ. Paul brought the testimony when he came to Corinth (Acts 18). He told the people there if they become believers, certain things will happen to them and in them. And God confirmed that when it actually happened.

#### **V. Thanks for believer's standing at the second coming, v. 7, 8**

- A. The revelation (apocalypse, advent) of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned at the end of verses 7 and 8. At that time, believers will be presented by Christ to the Father, in blameless condition. That is because He has taken all their blame.
- B. The use of our gifts presently is colored by the notion that believers eagerly await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the future. His coming motivates us in two ways. First, it motivates and energizes us to *use* our gifts because we are accountable to do so. Second, the coming of Christ helps us to use those gifts *properly*, again knowing that we will be evaluated not just on whether we had the gift and used it in some way, but that we used it to honor God and build up His church.

## VI. Thanks for blamelessness confirmed, v. 8

- A. God will confirm us to the end. He will finish His work in us.
- B. How do we know this? Because God is faithful. At rock bottom, we have the attribute of God's faithfulness upon which we can rely. He will see to it. He will never fail in His design to confirm believers to the image of His Son. To God, failing is not an option. It is not a *thing*. This is why we can have utter confidence in Him. Short-run seeming failures are just that—seeming. Just like the crucifixion of Christ seemed like a failure, but it turned into the greatest victory the world has ever known—victory over sin, and death, and Hell, and Satan. He was crucified in weakness, but raise in power, because God is faithful.

### Conclusion

- A. So far, things sound very good in Corinth. But first impressions are not always correct. It takes a lot of wisdom and more information to form a correct judgment. The blessings that Paul lists as reasons for his thanksgiving are twisted and abused by the church in such a way that they become almost unrecognizable. For example, the church is given all the gifts they need, but they use those gifts to puff up themselves rather than build up one another. Another example is that they were given salvation by God through Jesus Christ, yet they were focusing attention on human messengers of the gospel.
- B. Remember, however, that God had *begun* a good work in the Corinthian church (Philippians 1:6). He had not yet *finished* it! Therefore, some growing pains, even serious ones, are expected. The purpose of the letter is to propel their growth along so that they will in fact be more like blameless saints and less like messed up ones (Col. 1:28).
- C. We can thank God like Paul did for the Corinthians. Why? God gave us saving grace and along with it He gave us every gift necessary in our context to minister for Christ as we await His return. We have been made rich, just as the gospel promised. When Christ comes, we will not be disappointed, because we will be confirmed as blameless. God will see to it, because He is faithful.

MAP

Take-home activity: Circle or highlight every reference to Christ in verses 1-9. Do you count 10? If you got 12, you may be interpreting a pronoun that refers to God the Father as if it refers to Christ. There is some question on that issue. But get the point that Paul is "preaching Christ" to these people (1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:5).