

**Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup> I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—<sup>6</sup> because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. <sup>7</sup> Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. <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. <sup>9</sup> God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

**This is God's Word.**

**Dear Fellow Members of the Church of God,**

Where do you turn for help? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Where can I get help for this problem I have? Sometimes we wrestle with problems and the answer is right there in front of us but for some reason we didn't see it or we chose to ignore it.

The congregation in Corinth had some problems. Paul had the answers to these problems and so he sent his message to the Corinthians in the form of a letter – the words before us today. But Paul said this is not only a message for the Corinthians, it is also **“A Message for Our Congregation.”** So as we consider this message we want to look at **“The Messenger,” “The Message,”** and **“The Expected Results of the Message.”**

**I.** Every week for the last few months I have been getting e-mails from someone claiming to be a bank officer of a foreign bank, usually someplace in Europe or Africa. They claim I have won millions of dollars and all I have to do is contact them so they can arrange to send it to me. Well, it turns out that if you contact them they will ask you to send money so they can process your claim. They will keep doing this until you figure out it is a scam and haven't really won anything at all. In order for something to be credible you have to know who you're dealing with.

That's why Paul begins by establishing his credentials. He pointed out to the Corinthians that he was their former pastor – someone they knew. He was an apostle. This put him into a special group of people who had seen Jesus personally and was called by Jesus personally to spread the message of the Gospel. He was doing all this by God's will. This wasn't Paul's plan. It was God's. If there's any doubt about that just look at Paul's call to faith. Paul had been happy persecuting Christians and destroying God's church but Jesus had called him to faith and called him to be his special messenger to the Gentiles.

Now Paul was writing this letter with Sosthenes at his side. Sosthenes was there to substantiate what had been going on in Corinth and thus add more validity to Paul's message.

Paul established his credentials for us also. He wasn't just some tent maker who decided one day to give preaching a try. He was God's special messenger sent to record God's message for us. A message we can trust and a message meant to help us – God's people.

**II.** So what is this message for us and our congregation? **“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”** We are those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ – We are the church of God in Austin. Which means we are sanctified by Christ Jesus and called to be holy.

The word sanctified means to be set apart as holy. Doesn't that seem strange that Paul would talk about us that way? Are we really holy and perfect all the time? Later in verse 8 he describes us as **“blameless.”** Again we have to ask, “How can that be?” The congregation in Corinth was anything but holy – they had all kinds of problems and we have to admit we are a lot like that church in Corinth. So how in the world can Paul call us holy?

Did you notice how often Paul mentions Christ Jesus in this section? Nine different times. It is Christ Jesus who makes us holy and blameless in God's sight. Christ Jesus who came to us because of God's grace and mercy. God saw our pitiful condition and felt sorry for us. He showered us with his love by sending his Son to be our Savior.

I have a shirt with a tomato stain right in the center between two buttons. I have tried many different things to get that stain out but it won't go away. I can wear a tie to cover the stain but it's still there. The only way to get rid of the stain is to take the shirt off and toss it away. That's what God did with the stain of our sins. He didn't cover them up – rather he tossed them away from us by forgiving them.

As we think about that – note that Paul didn't thank the Corinthians for being such faithful people. He thanked God for bringing his saving grace to the Corinthians. God is the one doing all the work. And **GOD'S WORK HAS RESULTS.**

**III.** As a result of God's work we have been enriched and don't lack spiritual gifts. Another way of saying this is that we have received an abundance of spiritual blessings. Some we recognize like faith, love and wisdom. All gifts of the heart. Faith and the love of our Savior are placed in the heart by the Holy Spirit but what about wisdom. Is that really a gift of the heart? Yes, the wisdom of salvation – the knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done for us changes our heart.

Probably the best spiritual gift is being enriched in speaking and knowledge. Peter and John when told to be quiet about the message of salvation said, **“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”** (Acts 4:20). We have the knowledge of salvation and the privilege to talk about our Savior. God has made us rich in this knowledge and gives us many opportunities to share the richness of salvation. That comes as a result of our faith.

We don't lack anything necessary for salvation and thus God will keep us blameless **“as we wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”** Paul is talking about Judgment Day a day when Christians will go home to be with their Savior forever.

How will he keep us strong and blameless to the end? That comes as the result of faith and faith comes from hearing God's Word. So he will do all this through the Word. That is God's promise and we can count on it. God is always faithful and never changes.

There are so many uncertainties in life. We all have various problems and none of us are perfect. But God has given us His Message. We can trust the messenger because he has been sent by God for just that purpose. We can trust the message because it brings us God's grace and peace. The result is we look forward to when our Lord will come to take us home, but until then he will enrich us with his spiritual blessings and give us all that we need for life. Amen.