

Text: I Corinthians 1:4-9

Title: “The Truth about Us”

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION - Many of you are familiar with movie “The Lion King.” It’s one of my favorites. You might remember there’s a scene where the young lion Simba couldn’t decide whether or not he should return to the Pride Lands, his home. He’s struggling because of some heavy baggage he has carried, including a lot of guilt about his father’s death, which he thinks he’s responsible for. As Simba was growing up though, his father had taught him much about his role in life and how he should act. But when things became difficult, he ran away. Now his past has caught up with him. There’s a point in the movie when the silly baboon named Rafiki finds Simba and challenges him with an question, “Who are you?” Here’s a little clip from the movie. Watch carefully.

Later Simba has a dream and he hears his father say to him over and over, “Remember who you are. Remember. Remember.”

We have some friends who had an interesting habit. When one of their teenage children went out for the evening with their friends or on a date, they would say two things: “I love you,” and “Don’t forget who you are.”

Turn to I Corinthians 1:4-9.

That’s something that needs to be said in God’s spiritual family, the church, as well. Unfortunately, many believers do not know who they are. They don’t know who they are by virtue of the fact that they are a child of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And that was true all the way back 2000 years ago as a concerned apostle named Paul writes to a group of believers for whom he has a great burden.

Allow me to begin by reading just the first few words of v.4.

1 Corinthians 1:4 - I always thank God for you...

Here’s a church that’s on the verge of a split into personality cults. Here’s a church where church members get drunk at the Lord’s Supper. Here’s a church that abuses spiritual gifts and confusion reigns. Here’s a church that refuses to exercise church discipline of one of their members who is committing sexual immorality with his step-mother. Here’s a church where church members are suing each other. Here’s a church where doubts about the bodily resurrection of Christ have crept in.

And in light of that you might have expected Paul to begin his letter differently.

ILLUSTRATION – You know of my love for “Peanuts” comic strips. Charles Shultz was a Christian and so many of the strips that he composed ring with truth. One of them has Linus sitting on the couch when his big sister Lucy comes in and sits down beside him. And she looks at him. And she speaks: “It’s funny. It happens just by looking at you.” Linus says, “What’s that?” Lucy replies, “I feel a criticism coming on.”

Let's not be fault finders, but grace finders. Let's be people who see that grace of God at work.

1 Corinthians 1:4 - I always thank God for you...

We need to see ourselves properly. Like Simba, we need to remember who we are. And we must think of others, and the church in light of what God is doing through the Cross in our lives. Who you are ... who we are...

Let's continue reading vv.4-9

I want to talk to you this morning about "The Truth About Us." There are some things that are true about every authentic church, including the ancient church found in Corinth and the present-day church in Fort Worth.

Note: Some of these truths about us are in the past tense, some in the present tense, some in the future tense. It has to do with what has already taken place in and for us ... it has to do with what is happening in the here and now ... and what will occur in the there and then (future).

Here's the truth about us:

1. WE ARE GRACIOUSLY FAVORED.

v.4 – "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."

Many things happened to each one of here today who have received Christ. The moment you and I put our trust in Christ grace was poured into our lives in the person of Jesus Christ, enabling me to be and to do all I need to be and do.

ILLUSTRATION - Now if you're married, you know a little about this. I don't know about you, but I'm certain that when Nan Cranford came into my life, grace came into my life. Thirty years ago this coming Tuesday, Nan and I had our first date. She went with me to a little country church in Red Springs, Texas where I was the "keynote speaker" for a Valentines banquet. And she's been having to listening to me ever since.

And when we got married a little over a year later, I know that when she came into my life it enable me to be a better person than I would have been otherwise ... for countless reasons. And most married men here today would have to acknowledge the same thing.

But that is just a speck compared with the magnificent resources that have come into our lives through Jesus Christ.

There's still a long way for all of us. But we've already been given grace in Christ. Let's thank God for what He is doing in each others lives.

And this isn't just forgiveness for our sins, and our "Get Out of Hell Free" card. It's more than we could ever imagine ... grace for every need of every day from now through eternity. And it's happening right here, right now.

And what follows are the evidences of this gracious favor shown to them in Christ.

2. WE ARE GENEROUSLY ENRICHED.

God didn't just erase our sin when we were saved. He enriched our lives through Christ in ways that are unimaginable.

v.5 – "For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge..."

Now we'll elaborate on this more we get down to v.7, but the fact is that through the grace of God we have become rich in Christ. We are not talking necessarily about financial riches, though riches are certainly a gift from God. By virtue of the grace of God shown to us in Christ, God has deposited tremendous spiritual wealth in the church.

This church was particularly wealthy and enriched in two specific areas:

- **"Speech" – Oral expression**

Now Corinth was a very cultured city. The typical citizen of Corinth would have spoken well. In fact, it wasn't uncommon to hear the highest form of Greek spoken in the streets and marketplace of Corinth. In those days people had the ambition ... "To speak as they do in Corinth." The citizens of Corinth spoke with accuracy, beauty, and artistic finesse.

But the "speech" spoken of here was not the result of a cultured upbringing, but of a supernatural work of God. In the church were people with extraordinary gifts of speaking the Word (logos) and communicating truth.

That's one of the distinguishing marks of any authentic NT churches ... there are people deposited in the church who are gifted in this way. Why? Because we need it.

- **"Knowledge" – Spiritual perception.**

This oral expression flowed from a spiritual perception.

Now again, Corinth was known for its intellectual and philosophical prowess, like other Greek cities, such as Athens.

But the "knowledge" here is not the product of superior education and tutoring, but of the supernatural work of "enriching" that occurred when these people were born again. The word here speaks of intimate, experiential knowledge that is the result of the Holy Spirit.

And every authentic church possesses this magnificent wealth of truth. Everything the church needs to say to a lost world is given us in Christ. Everything the church needs to say to each other is deposited in the church for now until the end.

The reason they were so wealthy in Word and in knowledge is because of the next truth about who we are.

3. WE ARE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED.

v.6 – “Because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you.”

ILLUSTRATION - Let me illustrate this in a way that may help you understand what Paul was getting at. Today, our church is a tremendously wealthy church. I’m not speaking of financial wealth, but spiritual wealth. God has called together a body of believers here, and enriched this church. Scattered throughout this church are men and women with gifts of communicating truth to others. Scattered throughout this church are men and women with extraordinary spiritual insight into the Word of God and the ways of God.

Now this is evidence that something happened many years ago ... something that secured this for us today. Nearly 100 years ago, some mission-minded people from the College Avenue Baptist Church came out here to the south side of Fort Worth and started a church in a simple church building. They began to preach the Gospel in this suburban (at the time) neighborhood. And people got saved. And through the years godly pastors and laypersons invested their lives in the sharing of the Gospel in this part of the city.

And this supernatural activity in our church today is evidence that the Gospel works. It really does! People hear it and heed it, and it takes root and anchors the lives of those who believe ... and forges them into a spiritually wealthy body of believers. That’s the truth about us. But there’s more.

CONCLUSION

In the church, you and I have to be interested in what God is up to in each others lives ... not nousey, but vitally interested. Are you more aware of the evidences of grace, or the areas where a person isn’t measuring up?

Grace finders ... in the life of a friend in your small group/Sunday School class ... in the life of the college student you are mentoring ... in the life of that teenager you are parenting ... in the life of that widow you are helping. There’s a glowing ember of grace there in each believer’s life. And we must fan it into flame through prayer and thanksgiving and encouragement. Paul will have to confront later, but his first approach is thanksgiving. Think of what would happen when this becomes the habit in our church.

Church, this is who we are. Do you see the believers around you in that light? Are you a grace finder or a fault finder.

Sometimes I will be sitting in my office with a church member who has some problem ... grief ... failure ... struggle. I really try to see beyond that in every instance. Not at the problem ... but that the potential ... no, at the reality of who they are. God is working in at person's life.

And in battles the despair when I consider that there's much more at work here than it appears. The child of God has a magnificent destiny. In the future? Sure. But right and right now, because you are ...

GRACIOUSLY FAVORED IN CHRIST ... GENEROUSLY ENRICHED IN CHRIST ...
SECURELY ESTABLISHED ...