

Text: I Corinthians 1:4-9

Title: “The Truth About Us” Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – If you’ve ever traveled to the beautiful central coast of California you may have visited a fabulous mansion called San Simeon. This “retreat” for the late newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst has a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean. Hearst had built San Simeon primarily to house his enormous art collection. He had invested a fortune in collecting great works of art. One day he read about some valuable pieces of art and decided that he must add them to his collection. He sent his agent abroad to locate and purchase them. Months went by before the agent returned and reported to Hearst that the items had at last been found ... they were stored in his own warehouse. Hearst had purchased them years before!

The Bible tells us that as believers we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. We are works of art! But many of these “works of art” are hidden away somewhere, not displaying the glory of God in our lives. And the challenge is to get you, a work of God’s grace, on display for the glory of God.

And it all starts with us understanding the truth about us. Open your Bibles to I Corinthians 1:4. I started this message last week and I want to conclude this morning as we talk about “The Truth About Us.”

As Paul writes to the church in Corinth, he opens his letter, his epistle, with a genuine expression of thanks to God for what He has done in the church in Corinth. 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. **Read vv.4-9.**

I said last week that some of these truths about us are in the past tense, some in the present tense, and 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).

Now here is what had already happened for the believers at Corinth, and what has already happened for us ... 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 ... enabling us to become people we could have never been apart from grace.

The irony in this is that Corinth was one messed-up church. Reading I Corinthians can make you blush. But with all their problems, Paul also understood the truth about them. They were God's people, graciously favored by Him with things they didn't deserve, but were their's nonetheless.

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 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...”

There are many ways that the grace of God enriches our lives, and enriches the church. But here Paul seems to have in mind the enriching of the church with spiritual capabilities for ministry ... spiritual gifts. There are two in particular:

- **“Speech”** – In the church were people with extraordinary gifts of speaking the Word (logos) and communicating truth.
- **“Knowledge”** – This oral expression flowed from a spiritual perception. The word here speaks of intimate, experiential knowledge that is the result of the Holy Spirit.

God has already deposited the gifts in the church to fulfill the calling and the mission He has given us. There's more about this later.

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.”

The Gospel works. When we hear it and heed it, the Gospel is confirmed in us. The activity of God is established in us when the Gospel is preached, and people believe. It 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.

All this has already happened. Now we move to the “present tense” truth about us.

4. WE ARE SPIRITUALLY GIFTED.

v.7 – “Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”

Note: The next big event in God’s great plan of redemption is the second coming of Christ. We “eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”

There are many words used in the NT to describe the second coming. And one of the them is the word *apocalypse*. It means “the unveiling.” This is the word used in the title of the last book of the Bible, the Revelation.

One day the curtain of eternity will be pull back to reveal, to unveil our coming Lord. What a glorious day that’s going to be.

And what are we to be doing as a church until that time comes? We are to carry on the mission and ministry God has given us through the use of our spiritual gifts.

“wait” = anticipation + activity. We aren’t just sitting around doing nothing.

v.7 – “Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift ...

Literally, you don’t lag behind any other church in spiritual gifts.

Listen, every gift our church, and any church, needs to carry out its mission and ministry is already on deposit in the church.

That’s what it says in v.5: **“For in him you have been enriched in every way...**

They had already been made rich with not just two spiritual gifts, but with all the gifts the church needed.

Now there was much confusion in the church about spiritual gifts. Paul is going to spend three chapters later correcting their understanding and their use of spiritual gifts.

God has deposited spiritual gifts in this church. These gifts and gifted persons make up the church. And if you are a member of the church, a saved person connected to this local church you are one of those parts.

“gift” = *charismata* or “grace gifts.” It is a variation of the word Paul uses in v.4 for grace (*charis*). These are not things that we are to boast about. They are evidences of the grace and favor of God, not of our worthiness, talent or superiority, no more than our salvation is evidence of our worthiness, talent or superiority.

Now notice that these gifts are called “spiritual gifts” in the NIV. Actually the word for “spiritual” is not in v.7. But in other places the word for “spirit” or “spiritual” is used in association with the grace gifts. The reason is that the gifts are not natural, but supernatural, in that they are imparted by the

Holy Spirit. Let me give you a preview of what we'll get into later in our study. Turn to I Cor.12:1,4-11.

Note: In I Cor.12:1 and elsewhere in the chapter Paul does use the word for "spiritual."

1 Corinthians 12:1 - Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.

In fact in this instance, the word for "gifts" does not appear in the original text, but the word "spiritual" does. The word for "spiritual" is *pneumatikos*, and means here "spiritual things." That's what the gifts are ... spiritual things. So they come by God's grace through the operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Read I Cor.12:4-11.

Spiritual gifts are the special equipment for ministry that the Holy Spirit gives in some measure to all believers and that are to be wholly under His control and used for Christ's glory through the church.

Note: If you are a Christian you must, I repeat, must be connected to a local church where you give and receive ministry through the spiritual gifts.

Question: Just how healthy would a foot be flopping around here, not connected to a body? What about a hand?

ILLUSTRATION – Many of us are watching the winter Olympics. Here's a little exercise we might do. Next time you watch a snowboarder, imagine just a big foot in that snowboard going down the hill. No body, just a foot. That's ridiculous, isn't it? Or think of that most exciting of Olympic events ... curling. This is where they push this smooth rock down the ice, sort of like shuffleboard. Imagine an arm pushing that stone. No body, just an arm. That's ridiculous, isn't it?

God wants His work done by a Body called the church.

We are spiritually connected to the church when we are saved.

And I repeat, the way you are practically connected to a local body of believers is not just by signing up to be a member. We encourage and ask you to do that ... to "join the church" because we want to keep up with and shepherd every individual and family in the church. But biblically and practically, the way you "join" a church is to so connect yourself to a church that you are both giving and receiving ministry through the operation of the spiritual gifts of the church.

So we are ... GRACIOUSLY FAVORED IN CHRIST ... GENEROUSLY ENRICHED IN CHRIST ... SECURELY ESTABLISHED ... SPIRITUALLY GIFTED, AND ...

5. WE ARE ETERNALLY SECURE.

There's something from the past ... for the present ... and also in the future.

v.8 – “He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What a great promise! This is what God is up to. This is what God has obligated Himself to do. This is our destiny. God finishes what He starts.

We are called by God (vv.2,9) and we are kept by God.

Philippians 1:6 - being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION - Now let me tell you what this doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that God is going to drag you kicking and screaming to heaven, like we drag an untrained dog to the vet. They're on a leash, and most of the time they're trying to go somewhere and do something that we don't want them to do.

No, the promise here is that God finishes what He starts. Our destiny is eternity with Him in heaven. And He begins by giving us a new heart. As we grow in grace we come to desire the things that He desires.

In other words, the assurance of the believer is not that God will save him even if he stops believing, but that God will keep him believing. God will sustain you in faith. He will cause you to persevere.

And our right standing with God means that God will make sure that when we stand before Him at the end of time, we will be guiltless (blameless), with no charge against us.

ILLUSTRATION – Recently I was traveling to a speaking engagement. The pastor for whom I was speaking had already made arrangements for me to stay at a particular hotel. He said, “Everything is already covered. Just check in and enjoy your stay.” Sure enough, when it came time for me to check out, the clerk said, “Dr. Dean, there is no outstanding balance. There's nothing for you to pay. It's already been taken care of.”

That's the promise. Now what is the basis of the promise?

1 Corinthians 1:9 - God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Our faith rests upon God's faithfulness.

CONCLUSION

This is what God is up to.

GRACIOUSLY FAVORED IN CHRIST ... GENEROUSLY ENRICHED IN CHRIST ...
SECURELY ESTABLISHED ... SPIRITUALLY GIFTED ... AND ETERNALLY SECURE