

The Gifts of Grace

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[0 : 00] left Athens and went to Corinth, and he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tent makers. And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that their Christ was Jesus. And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be upon your heads. I am innocent.

From now I will go to the Gentiles. And he left there and went to the house of a man called Titius Justice, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord, together with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing Paul, believed and were baptized. And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not be silent. For I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you. For I have many people in this city. And he stayed a year and six months teaching the word of God to them. Then turning over to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and reading there from verse 1 to verse 9.

Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and our brother Sosthenes. To the church of God, which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to God always for you, because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful, by whom you are called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen. The Lord bless to us. His readings may be to his praise and his glory.

As I mentioned last week, when Daniel is away until he comes back on the first Sunday in December, going through the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians. And last week we looked at verses 1 to 3.

[3 : 37] I'm not going to repeat any of that. That's finished. That was called the status of the Corinthians. This is called the gifts of grace. Now, one of the things I did mention last week was that in his letter, what he's doing is to tell the Corinthians what they are in God.

What a marvelous thing that is to do, to realize what you are in the grace of God. And so he tells them, despite your divisions, despite your faults, you are the church in Corinth.

That is the body of Christ. They are set apart to God for his special purpose. They are called to be saints.

They exercise a healthy prayer ministry. So here in verses 4 to 9, he's taking this a stage further. Because now what he's emphasizing is not just them being the church, the body of Christ, but how they came to be that.

[5 : 00] The grace of God has been given to them. They are enriched in Christ in every way. And all of this has a purpose and a plan.

Think firstly about the gift of grace. I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.

That in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among them.

So here is the starting point for their existence in God. And the starting point. And the starting point is the fact that the grace of God has been given to them.

They didn't earn it. They didn't perform some meritorious work, meritorious work which was going to give them great standing.

[6:09] It was given them. Now think about this. The idea and the word grace does not occur in the Old Testament at all.

Instead, there's a word, *heir*, which means favor, beauty, regard, or approval.

And it's used of Noah. Genesis 6 verse 8. Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

But in the New Testament, things are different. Things have improved. And so Paul uses the word *charis*, from which you get charisma, charismatic.

Grace, it means grace, kindness, mercy, goodwill, and also a special manifestation of the divine presence.

[7:12] What does grace mean? Theologians tell us grace means the unmerited favor of God.

What does that mean? Well, it's like this. Excuse me a minute. You're all good Christian people.

And one night, there's a knock at the door. It's a summer's night. The sun is shining. And when you open the door, there's a tramp, a man of the road, standing there.

And he says, I'm awful thirsty, missus. Could I get a cup of tea? As I've said, you're good Christian people. So you go in and you make it for him.

And you give it to him in your best china. And he drinks it. That's an unmerited favor. He did nothing to deserve it.

[8:23] But out of your kindness, he's given it to you. And that is exactly what the apostle is saying concerning the grace of God as far as the Corinthians are concerned.

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.

A verse I referred to last week was this. John 1, 16, 17. And from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And what that text means is that the instrument in God for giving the law was Moses.

But it wasn't revealed in him. It was revealed by him. Whereas grace is not only revealed by Jesus Christ, but in Jesus Christ.

[9:37] What do you find when you read the gospels? No man ever spoke like this man. The word was made flesh.

We beheld his glory. We saw the grace of God in this wonderful man. That's not only history.

That's an experience. Paul writes in the Galatians and he says this. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his son in me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

So the grace of God is given to Paul through a personal revelation of Jesus Christ.

Next year is 2017. Next year is 2017. And if we're all still here, and I trust you will be in 2017, we will be celebrating 500 years since the Reformation.

[10:56] It was at the Reformation. It was at the Reformation. This truth of the grace of God was rediscovered in a personal way by Martin Luther.

It was revealed to him. Salvation is not by works, but by the grace and kindness of God. It's a very important truth.

So we find that Paul goes to Corinth in the verses that we read from chapter 18. And he first of all preaches to the Jews.

And verse 6 relates, So verses 7 and 8, they record this.

And Paul left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justice, a worshiper of God. That phrase, a worshiper of God, doesn't mean he was a Christian.

[12:14] What it means is that he was a Greek-fearing, a God-fearing Greek, who attended the synagogue, but didn't necessarily go along with all the minutiae of the Jewish law about when something could be eaten and when it couldn't be eaten, and when it was right to do this or that or the other.

That's what it means. He was a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household, and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul and believed, and were baptized.

Now there is a particular reference to when the door opened for the Corinthians to receive the message of grace.

It happened through this man, Titius Justice. He passed it on to his next-door neighbor, who happened to be the ruler of the synagogue.

Now, we read earlier, as I've already mentioned, in Acts 18.5, when Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.

[13:43] And the verse is indicating that this is not something that Paul just did once. He was doing it again and again and again.

And he used this message with great effect to the non-Jewish citizens of Corinth. So now he can say this, I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.

So these people in Corinth, what did they have? They had a personal testimony of Christ.

The grace of God, they had received it. Let's go on that and think about the productivity. In every way you were enriched in him with all speech and knowledge, even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed amongst you so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

So what we're talking about here is the fruitfulness of the grace of God which the Corinthians had received. And it's developed in these verses in three distinct ways.

[15:10] They are enriched in Christ in all speech and knowledge. The testimony to Christ has been confirmed amongst them and they are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

Now, what you have to realize is this. When you read the letters of Paul, in the introductory statement, first seven or eight, nine verses, he will often make a reference to a theme that he's going to develop later on.

For example, if you take Romans 1 to 7, it starts off, Paul, Paul, a servant of God, called to be an apostle which he had promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

And Paul, later in the epistle to the Romans, will expound that and develop it. So here, in 1 Corinthians, in these verses that I wrote about being enriched in all speech and knowledge, he's making a reference to what you find in chapter 12.

In that chapter, he gives a response to their question concerning the ministry of the spirits of God, gifts of God. So he says, in verse 5, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and knowledge.

[16:51] Now, these two statements, speech and knowledge. The first of which is the Greek word *logos* and the second of which is the Greek word *gnosis* meaning knowledge.

If you look at the list of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, you find that the first two are the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge.

How are we to explain them? They are, in fact, preaching gifts. And these two words, wisdom and knowledge, were the sound bites of a heretical sect which we know by the name of Gnosticism.

Now, we would be here all night if I was to tell you what that meant. But one of the things it did mean was this, that those who believed it believed that they were a spiritual elite who alone knew God and that without belonging to this spiritual elite, you couldn't know God.

So, these gifts of preaching in terms of the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are specific gifts given to the apostle to render ineffective this heresy.

[18:26] Now, it is the case that the church in every generation has heresies to deal with.

And this heresy that I'm talking about is at the background of most of the New Testament letters. In particular, it's at the background of 1 John.

Because John writes and he says, I write to you fathers because you have known him who is from the beginning.

Knowledge of God. that's at the root of this heresy. And it's these preaching gifts that render it ineffective.

When we looked at the word *charis*, I said that one of the meanings was a special manifestation of the divine presence. And that manifestation is in the varied ministries of the people who preached at Corinth.

[19 : 33] From the first chapter, we know that Peter was there, Apollos, and Paul. But in chapter 16, there's another three mentioned. And they are Stephanus, Fortunatus, Achaeacus.

They also were preachers. They also were endowed with the Spirit of God. They also had a ministry. How do we know that the ministry that they had was approved?

Steve dealt with this this morning. All ministry like this must give glory to the testimony of Christ. Jesus, teaching in the Gospel of John, said, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Here's the golden rule. If the ministry is glorifying the person who's giving it, it's not of God.

[20 : 53] And this is the meaning of the phrase, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed amongst you. Now, it's very interesting to me that in the context I'm talking about, the word that I've translated as confirmed actually means prove to be true.

true. So, all of these, they must glorify Christ, not the person who's giving it.

The final thing he's got to say about this is, you are not lacking in any spiritual gift. Now, lacking, the Greek term, which means to lack, have need of, or fall short of.

Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

It's that same verb that's used there. And what the apostle is saying in Romans 3, 23 is they haven't got the glory of God in their lives anymore because their lives are dominated by sin.

[22 : 14] For a practical illustration, go to the wedding of Cana in Galilee and there it states when the wine had run out.

It's the same verb. It's the same meaning. The Corinthians weren't like that. Such was the grace of God in their midst. They had this ministry of the Spirit of God.

God. Now all of this ministry that the apostle has been given, Apollos, Peter, and all the rest, it has a purpose.

Verses 7 and 8. As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So here in these two verses here, the aim of all ministry is stated. It is this that ministry is pointing to odds.

[23 : 25] It is that they are to be acceptable and found acceptable when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. Now, what has happened here is that the grace of God, and mark this, has made them ready for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, verse 7. And this idea of as you wait, actually means to wait expectantly.

Now, this is the situation in the church in the first century. They lived with this every day. But what's happened today?

We've gone to a problem of under emphasis. this. And we're at that problem because of some mistakes that the church made just prior to World War II.

You may have heard of Charles Price, who ministers in People's Church, Toronto. Prior to the Second World War, there was another gentleman who ministered there called Oswald Sanders.

[25 : 00] And he produced a book called Is the Antichrist at Hand? In the book, he identified Adolf Hitler as the Antichrist and Mussolini as the false prophet.

And what happened was that because of these extreme positions that were taken, the average clergyman to distance himself from this, just didn't preach on it at all.

And that legacy has somehow come down to us right now. And we need to recover in our thinking, in the way that we live, the expectancy that the early church had.

Now that grace is what makes it, puts them into a state of readiness. And that grace is defined by the apostle in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9.

By grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast. And so the all-important transaction that makes them into a state of readiness, that makes them ready to be waiting for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the reception of the grace of God.

[26 : 35] But listen, there's more to it than that. As you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Take the first of these. He will sustain you to the end. Earlier on in the chapter, we read, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed amongst you.

It's the same verb. But it doesn't mean confirm here. It means strengthen or sustain. And this is what Paul is saying to the Corinthians.

Because you have received the grace of God, Christ himself will carry you through thick and thin, through every tribulation, through every sickness, through every persecution.

He will present you faultless before the throne of God. God will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 56] He will keep you. That's what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that if you belong to Christ, he will preserve your life. Through thick and thin, through persecution, through depression, through sadness, through joy, he'll do it.

But he'll do it in a certain way. He'll do it so that you are beyond reproach or without fault.

So that those who have been called and the grace of God is now their experience are now preserved by that same grace into a state of readiness day by day.

Think of the letter of Jude, the way it ends. Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing.

What a promise that is. The way the apostle finishes this in verse nine is this. God is faithful.

[29 : 24] By whom you are called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now that's a wonderful blessing, a wonderful way to end his introductory section.

God is faithful. And down the years the people of God have proved it.

Day after day, night in, night out, God is faithful. By whom this faithful God you were called into the fellowship of his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And that calling has taken place in your life and in mine by the presence of the Holy Spirit. So this is a Trinitarian blessing.

God is faithful. faithful. He has called you into the fellowship of his son in Christ. And he's achieved it by the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 38] So this then is what the apostle has to say about the gifts of grace as far as the Corinthians are concerned. And next time we'll go on to consider the unity of the Corinthians in verses 10 to verse 17.

For now God is faithful. Say amen to that and you'll say amen to it tomorrow.

Amen.