It's Wonderful to be a Christian!

I Corinthians 1:1-9

1-8-2023

Introduction - v.1

**** The most wonderful privilege in life is to be a true Christian!***
Why is it so wonderful? Answer: Because of all God has done for us in Christ Jesus!

I. He has given us a Church Family (v.2a)

II. He has set us apart from the world (v.2b)

III. He has renamed us "saints" (v.2c)

IV. He has freely showered us with grace (v.4)

V. He has enriched us with talents & abilities (v.5)

VI. He has given us a testimony for Christ (v.6)

VII. He has equipped up with all we need for life & ministry (v.7a)

VIII. He has promised us a blessed hope to look forward to (v.7b)

IX. He will keep us firmly secure in our salvation right to the end (v.8-9)

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Corinth, located west of Athens Greece, was a major cosmopolitan city, a huge seaport and a major trade center. It was loaded with money, prosperity, jobs, idolatry, lust, worldliness, pagan religions, and immorality.

Wine, women, and wealth was what the average man of Corinth lived for.

To worship, for a male citizen of Corinth, usually meant going to the Temple of Aphrodite and having sexual relations with one of the 1,000 prostitutes who served Satan there.

The city had such a bad reputation that the term *"Korinthiazoma"* meant to "practice sexual immorality."

Corinth's reputation was such that prostitutes in other cities began to be called "Corinthian girls" (Life Applic. Bible note, p. 2,088).

It was to such a city, filled with sin and sensuality and crime and corruption, that the Apostle Paul went to minister the life-changing Gospel on his second missionary journey (SEE: Acts 18:1-11).

A miracle took place at Corinth! Actually, many miracles took place as men, women, boys and girls heard the Good News of Jesus Christ's substitutionary death, His bodily resurrection and His free gift of eternal life. Many were gloriously saved through the testimony of Paul and others. They became Christians. They went from being Corinthians to being Christians.

It is to these Christians (and, as 1:2 teaches, to Christians everywhere) that this Epistle was penned.

The Corinthians at Corinth were sinners saved by the grace of God! After professing faith in Christ, they formed a church - a church, which like ours, existed in one of the largest, wealthiest, and most godless cities in the world.

The faith of those believers would be tested. The pressures of the world's ways, philosophies, customs and morals would force the professing believers either closer to the Lord or away from the Lord.

This church had problems. Christians are not exempt from them. They had conflicts which came in various shapes and sizes. We know of some of them by the issues Paul deals with in I and II Corinthians. Satan attacked that church like he attempts to do to every church today. Many in that church were proud, divisive, self-centered, immoral, confused, jealous, and doctrinally unstable. It is these and other issues which Paul providentially addresses.

Paul writes from Ephesus (approx. 56 A.D.) to correct problems he had heard about (1:11) and to answer the questions church members had (7:1).

V. 1

"Paul" - Formerly a Pharisee sold out to Judaism, but converted to Christianity by a direct confrontation from Jesus Christ (Acts 9).

"An apostle" - An official "sent one." (the last official apostle whom the Lord called to that unique, foundational office - I Cor. 15:8-10).

Paul states his apostleship to establish his authority to correct and guide that ailing church.

"Through the will of God" - He was not a self-appointed apostle, nor did he receive his office of apostleship from men (Gal. 1:1).

"Sosthenes" - Perhaps the Sosthenes who was the former ruler of a Jewish synagogue at Corinth and who became a Christian (Acts 18:17). This man wrote this letter as Paul dictated it to him.

Verses 1 - 9 are some of the few positive things Paul had to say to the carnal Corinthians before he began to attempt to bring order out of the chaos that church slumped into.

Paul wanted to remind the Corinthians of who they were before rebuking them for not living up to who they were.

With all of the tests, trials, pressures, difficulties, yes at times inconsistencies, etc. that Christians face, one could ask: "Is it good to be a Christian?"

To that question I would answer: "Absolutely!"

**** The most wonderful privilege in life is to be a true Christian!***
Why is it so wonderful? Answer: Because of all God has done for us in Christ Jesus!

I. He has given us a Church Family (v.2a)

"The church" - Not a building but people professing personal faith in Jesus Christ.

There is the universal church of all truly saved people who will one day assemble in Heaven, and there is the local church of professing Christians who gather at a specific location. Here, Paul addresses a local church.

"Each church has two addresses: a geographic address (***"at Corinth"***) and a spiritual address (***"in Christ Jesus"***) (Wiersbe, p. 568).

"The church of God" - This church did not have a denominational label (Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.). [Unfortunately, today there are so many wolves in sheep's clothing claiming to be "Christian," that labels sometimes help. The infant Corinthian church existed at a time when distinguishing labels were not necessary.]

"Of God" - It was a church (*ekklesia*) of called-out-from-the-world people who belonged to God.

Any Biblical church is God's church, not man's! God had property in Corinth. That property was His people (Acts 18:10).

These Christians wee not lone rangers, scattered all over Corinth. They were a team, a family, an assembly that got together (5:4) every week, particularly on the first day of the week (16:2) to be mutually edified by the Word (14:26).

Song: "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God."

II. He has <u>set us apart</u> from the world (v.2b)

"Sanctified" - To set apart from <u>profane</u> (common) use to be specially kept for a special purpose (EX: expensive china and silverware).

We are sanctified for God's possession and use. If you are saved, you have been sanctified. Are you living like it? (II Tim. 2:20-21 - *"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*)

We have been set apart for Christ alone (WEDDING ILLUS - Wiersbe, p. 568).

"In Christ Jesus" - It is our position in Christ (our oneness with Him) that makes us sanctified.

Our positional sanctity comes only from Christ, not works and self-effort.

Don't be ashamed of being distinctly different from the world; this is a privilege to be uniquely set apart (separated) for God!

III. He has renamed us "<u>saints</u>" (v.2c)

"Called to be <u>saints</u>" - Every blood-bought child of God is a saint (a holy, set-apart one).

There is not a select, few canonized patron saints. Saint Sosthenes was just as much a saint as Saint Paul!

Our sainthood comes from God by His grace! Not from the Vatican.

Sainthood was a <u>present</u> reality for the believers at Corinth, not merely a future reality.

Being a "saint" does <u>not</u> imply "sinless perfection." The Corinthian church was living proof of that.

However, in God's eyes, and in our relationship with Christ, we are just as if we had never sinned (Rom. 5:1).

The Corinthians shared "sainthood" with all Christians *"<u>in every place</u>"* who have called upon Christ for salvation (Rom. 10:13) and call upon Him for daily strength and needed blessing.

Our practice should match our position; our lifestyle should match our label (*"saints")*, but unfortunately such is not always the case (ILLUS: MacArthur, p. 6).

EX: Alexander the Great to a soldier named Alexander: "Either change your ways or change your name."

IV. He has freely showered us with <u>grace</u> (v.4)

Although ***"grace"*** (v. 4) had already been ***"<u>given</u>"*** to the Corinthians at salvation, they still needed God's grace and peace to successfully live the Christian life (v. 3).

The hymnwriter said, "I need Thee every hour!"

Hence, Paul's wish for the Corinthians is that they would continue to experience grace and peace for daily living.

Note: The source of grace coming from both the Father and Son proves the equality and oneness of these Persons in the Godhead.

"I thank my God" - God gets the credit because God is the source of <u>grace</u>. It is not manufactured by human effort.

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

"By Jesus Christ" - Christ is the channel through which God's grace flows. If you are not connected to Christ, you are not connected to God's saving grace.

V. He has enriched us with talents & abilities (v.5)

Not only did God give them saving grace, but in Christ they were enriched (made extremely rich) when it came to ***"utterance"*** (speaking ability) and ***"knowledge"*** (spiritual understanding).

They knew the truth and could with verbosity and eloquence express it.

"Ye come behind in no gift" - They did not lack any gift that God intended for them to have. It was utterly foolish for the Corinthians to seek more spiritual gifts (EX: tongues); they already had been given a rich supply of what God wanted them to have.

They had no problem communicating the truth and no problem knowing it (as we will see, however, some did have a problem in living it).

VI. He has given us a testimony for Christ (v.6)

Both the spiritual utterance (v. 5) and the spiritual knowledge that was manifested by the Corinthian Christians bore testimony to their salvation.

Their faith was witnessed by the truths they knew and spoke, truths which unsaved people have no insight (illumination) to express.

What you know about Christ and what you say about Christ gives testimony that you are a child of God. What is your testimony?

VII. He has <u>equipped</u> up with <u>all we need</u> for life & ministry (v.7a)

"Come behind" - (*hystereo* - hysterectomy) - to be missing, to be lacking.

We are *"complete in Him"* (Col. 2:10).

"Gift" - (*charisma)* - the result of grace

Spiritual gifts are talents and abilities that God gives of His own choosing (12:11). Every believer has at least one gift (12:7) and believers have differing gifts (12:4-6), not to be selfishly shown off but to be used for God's glory and service.

Many times what a gift amounts to is a "crucified talent." A talent or skill that you had prior to salvation, which now gets energized, re-directed and utilized in a manner which glorifies God!

Instead of using the gifts God gave them, they began arguing over which gifts were more important. They also began coveting each others' gifts when they should have been content.

VIII. He has promised us a <u>blessed hope</u> to look forward to (v.7b)

"Waiting" - to patiently wait with eager and earnest expectation.

Paul expected that Christ could come back in his lifetime.

"Coming" - (*apokalupsis)* - unveiling, revelation, uncovering.

When Christ comes, He will be visibly manifested both to the eyes of the ones raptured as well as to the unraptured world (Rev. 6).

The long phrase ***"our Lord Jesus Christ"*** points to the fact that our coming Lord is:

1. personal (*"our"*)
2. mighty (*"Lord")*
3. Savior (*"Jesus")*
4. Messiah (*"Christ")*

No other religion has a *"blessed hope"* (Ti. 2:13) -- but Christianity does!

IX. He will keep us <u>firmly secure</u> in our salvation right to the end (v.8-9)

"Confirm" - to establish something so that it is firm, stable and secure.

Our security rests not in our ability to safeguard our souls, but in Jesus Christ's ability! (Jn. 10:27-28)

"Blameless" - Lit. To not be called into account; To have nothing laid to one's charge (as the result of public investigation). The word "implies <u>not</u> merely acquittal, but the absence of even a charge or accusation against a person" (Vine P.131)

"When we enter Heaven we will not have all our sins and shortcoming flashed before us for everyone to see" (MacArthur, p. 21).

If even one sin appeared on our account, we would be banished from God's holy presence.

"The day of our Lord Jesus Christ" - that day is the day of the <u>Rapture</u> (cp. v. 7) (which will be followed by Christ's wrath upon the godless world).

"God is faithful" - to re-emphasize our eternal security, Paul bases this blessed doctrine on the faithfulness (trustworthiness) of God!

Paul assured the Philippians of a similar promise: *"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* (Phil. 1:6).

"Fellowship" - to <u>share</u> (a partnership relationship) with Christ.

What I share in with Christ as a *"joint heir"* (Rom. 8) will never be taken away.