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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
January 19, 2019
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 49:1-6, John 1:29-41
Hymns: 38; 363; 315:1-5; 313:3

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother,

²To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, ⁵that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Praise the Lord!

That is an expression that we hear from many American Christians when something good has happened. We also may hear someone use the expression "To God all praise and glory! Or "To God alone the glory!" It is honestly refreshing to hear people give the Lord the credit for what is happening in their lives. Sometimes when one hears such expressions of faith they sound very genuine. At others times one wonders if the speaker is sincere because it seems to roll almost glibly off their lips and too often.

The point that I wish to make is that it is good for us to remember that we are what we are by the grace of God. While this is true in all areas of life, it is most certainly true in our spiritual lives.

In this Epiphany season of the church year we focus our attention on how Jesus' glory is manifested or obviously revealed for us to observe. In our text this morning the Apostle Paul brings the point home and I mean home for each and every one of us so that we --

**THEME: Glorify Jesus for All He Has Accomplished
Among Us!**

Our text is the opening of an important epistle to a congregation of Christians living in a very worldly city, perhaps the most worldly city in the Roman Empire. It was important for these relatively new Christians to be reminded of the wonder of God's grace that had taken hold of their hearts and lives. It was the gospel of Christ crucified that brought them to faith. So it is for us yet today.

I. Jesus Made Us Members of the Church of God.

As was the custom of letter writing in that day Paul presented himself as the author of this letter, and also that one of the members of that Corinthian congregation named Sosthenes joined Paul in presenting this epistle to the Christians in Corinth. But it wasn't Paul or Sosthenes that had made any of them believers. That glory belonged to Jesus Christ. Paul was Jesus' ambassador. Paul delivered the message of the gospel of Christ! The glory of the gospel, and so also the glory of each and every Christian's salvation is of Christ and the Spirit of Christ who has called us by the gospel.

Paul addresses this epistle *"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."* (v.2-3) These words are powerful words reminding us that a miracle of grace takes place when someone comes to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. When people believe and gather together around the Word they are an assembly of members of the Church of God. That was what happened in Corinth. People that had not known the Lord, people who had been heathen, worshiping false gods, delving into every sort of carnal pleasure that one can imagine in this world, these people were called by God to be **saints**.

That is what Corinth was, a city offering its residents and visitors every sort of evil, and the people reveled in such carnal pleasure so much that even people of Rome, itself known for its immorality, cautioned others about traveling to Corinth. And yet that is the place where the Lord caused His gospel to prosper, and in the midst of all that evil He turned sinners into **saints**! These people were called out of the darkness of sin and death and credited with Christ's holiness, and included by God in the number that He knew as His people, the Church of God. It includes all those but **only** those who know Jesus as their Savior from sin. The gospel prospering in the city of Corinth demonstrates the truth of Paul's words to the Romans: *"where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹ so*

that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:20-21)

Do you see the glory of the grace of God in Christ Jesus? That is the blessing that Paul proclaimed not only for the Corinthian Christians, but which Jesus brings to us. Grace and peace come to us from God our Father in heaven and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Grace and peace** come to sinners and turn sinners from the path of sin and death to the highway to heaven. We also who live in the midst of a sinful world that more and more rejoices in unrighteousness have been called to be saints, made righteous by the blood of Christ, called by our Lord to life everlasting.

Addressing the Christians in Corinth Paul reminds us also that the Lord has --

II. Enriched Us with His Grace.

1 Corinthians 1:4-7 “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, ⁵ that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, ⁶ even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷ so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Later in this epistle Paul will have more to say about gifts of the Spirit, and how it was that the Corinthian Christians were hurting themselves by emphasizing and even abusing some spiritual gifts while neglecting the gift of love. But here it is Paul’s intent to remind these Christians that the Lord Jesus has already enriched them with many gifts of grace so that they are enabled by the Spirit to continue in true faith, and to present a bold testimony of the gospel in the midst of a perverse population. Without doubt a solid Christian witness will stand out in bold relief when presented in the midst of a wicked society. They were enriched in knowledge and in all utterance; in other

words the Lord gave them the ability and the words to speak. They were not shorted of any gift. Someone in the congregation of believers had the needed gift for the given situation. They needed to observe how true that was and praise the Lord Jesus for His providence, as they waited for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Do you see the glory of the Lord in the Corinthian congregation? They were really blessed! So also we should open our eyes to how the Lord Jesus has blessed us in our congregation. The Lord has drawn us together as a group of believers. He called each of us to faith in Jesus. He gave each of us varying gifts and abilities. He did this so that we would have a mix of gifts for the good and blessing of His Church, in **this** local gathering of believers. He did this so we could better serve the Lord in the spread of the gospel and building up, or edification of His people. It's all done by God's grace. And we should understand that this is to the praise of **His** glory!

The one special gift of grace that we have yet to discuss is that Jesus has --

III. Confirmed Us to the End.

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 "who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."

In these last verses of our text Paul directs the Christian's attention to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks of the Corinthian Christians being confirmed in their faith in Christ to the very end! This is an important statement because this was a congregation of Christians with a lot of problems, a lot of poor conduct within the church, and a lot of slipping into sin by members of the congregation. By all appearances they may have looked more like Corinthians, than Corinthian **Christians**. But Paul assured them that the grace of Christ Jesus was keeping them in faith. They were confirmed in their faith

in spite of their struggles with temptation and sin. They were confirmed in faith because their state of grace was not dependent upon **their** strength, but the **faithfulness of God!**

And so it is among us also. We are blessed by the Lord that Jesus has confirmed us in faith, and preserved us within the Church of God. It is not **our** strength or the perfection of our moral character. His grace still abounds in the presence of sin. In spite of our unfaithfulness God is faithful. We have been called into the fellowship of His Son, and He has preserved our place within that fellowship by confirming us in faith, in spite of our sin, in spite of the fact that all too often we blend in with the world a little too much looking more like Americans than American Christians standing out as God's people. We are blessed for we too shall be confirmed **unto the end**. We don't look for the end of our lives. We are told to look for the end of this world. We are told that we are to watch for the return of our glorious Lord Jesus. That is the Day of the Lord! That is the day of our final redemption. That is the day when we will know the full glory of our God and Savior Jesus Christ as He receives us to Himself in heaven.

Glorify Jesus for All He Has Accomplished Among Us!

Praise the Lord!

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans 15:13)