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1 Corinthians

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

1 Corinthians 1:3

After identifying himself, his calling, who was accompanying him, and who the letter is directed to, Paul now gives the standard greeting which is found in most of his epistles, "Grace to you and peace to you."

Grace is unmerited favor which cannot be earned. This is the common greeting among the Greek people. Peace however is the common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their language, the word is *shalom*. This is more than a greeting for calm or quiet, but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. Paul unites the two terms just as the church is being united between Jew and Gentile during his time. This grace precedes the peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Paul extends this wonderful blessing to them "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a greeting from the eternal God – both the unseen Father and His Son who reveals the Father to us. Rather than being an argument against the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is an argument for it. He is tying the two in as one - Jesus being a member of the Godhead. He is not making some type of great division, but a harmonious blending of the two.

Throughout Paul's letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which simply can't be missed. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world.

Life application: Outside of God's creation, which reveals Him in a general way, we cannot comprehend Him except through His special revelation. One way we receive special revelation is through the mouths of His prophets. But these prophets all testified to the same thing - Jesus Christ (John 5:39). The most magnificent special revelation of God that we have received is the incarnation of Jesus. But for us, even this isn't sight, it is found in the testimony of those who have recorded what they knew into the New Testament. So, in order to understand God, one must know Jesus Christ, and one cannot understand Jesus Christ unless they know their Bible. Today's life application.... know your Bible.

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus... 1 Corinthians 1:4

Paul's introduction and greetings are friendly and filled with encouragement. His closing statements will likewise be uplifting and attentive to the building up of his recipients. However, in the main body of the epistle, Paul is going to address, rather directly at times, many hard issues. Some of these issues may be found offensive in today's climate of "tolerance," but these are things which are important to God and which He expects us to pay heed to. We are saved by grace through faith, but we are expected to live out our salvation in holiness and right living.

Before addressing the difficult issues which much be addressed though, he first ensures those at Corinth that they are dear to him and ever on his mind. He states, "I thank my God always concerning you." One can just picture him walking along the road to his next destination and recalling the people and experiences there at Corinth. As they came to mind, he probably uttered such thoughts out

loud... "Yes Lord, thank You for those in Corinth. Thank you for Mikeopolus, Lisatha, and Philipherous. And Lord, you know how good Kristiniki was to me while I was there. Thank you for these folks, and all of those I've come to know." It is Paul who wrote to the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and he certainly did this himself in such a manner.

Next he explains why he was so thankful to God for them. It was based on "the grace of God which was given to you." Grace is unmerited favor. It cannot be bought, it cannot be earned, it is completely undeserved. But at the same time, it isn't forced upon us by God. Grace is bestowed upon us when we submit to Him properly. And this grace is "by Christ Jesus." He did the work; through Him we receive God's grace.

Upon receiving this grace, many benefits are available to the believer. Paul will continue with his thought in the coming verses concerning this, but then his writing will also cover those things that the Corinthians were engaged in which imposed upon God's grace. We will see that such behavior is not what God intends for His children. Let us pay heed to the words of 1 Corinthians. It is a classic example of a church in crisis and needing sound theology, proper doctrine, and right direction.

Life application: God's grace is sufficient to cover all our sins - past, present, and future. But He does not intended for this grace to be abused. We are saved in order to be holy and glorifying of Him, not to continue to participate in the sins of the flesh.

...that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge... 1 Corinthians 1:5

This verse carries on from the previous one where Paul thanked God continuously for the grace He had bestowed upon the Corinthians. This grace, given by Christ Jesus, was endowed so that they would be "enriched in everything by Him."

The knowledge of Christ is an exceedingly great knowledge, granted by grace. It enriches our lives in every way and is what leads us to the greatest knowledge of all, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. These are available to us through the teachings of the apostles who were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as they uttered out the words of the Bible. Paul and the other apostles gave their instructions to the churches directly; now we have the Bible which serves this purpose. In the Bible then is "everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge."

God has spoken by Christ everything we need for our spiritual life and practice. This verse, among many others unfortunately, leads folks to believe that because they have accepted Christ, they have all knowledge and all discernment in Christ. Relying on "Holy Ghost" power and instruction, they actually delude themselves and others into accepting whatever nonsense they utter at any given time - prophecies, teachings, proclamations, etc. But this isn't how things work. The apostolic instruction has been given and it has been recorded. Now, in order to understand "all utterance and all knowledge" we actually have to open our Bibles, read, study, and apply.

This is hard work and that is tedious to many. How much easier it is to simply pull out individual verses and misapply them to life's momentary trials or victories. But the Bible, and all it contains, is God's word and demands that we keep it in context as we study it. Through this precious word we are edified, built up, and given our proper knowledge.

Life application: To fully understand God's intentions for us is a long and difficult task. The first thing we need to do is to get right with Christ, receiving Him as Savior. After that, we should actively seek Him out through His superior word. Take time, every day, to read and study this infinitely precious treasure.

...even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you... 1 Corinthians 1:6

This verse, like the previous one, is continuing on from verse 4. The grace of God was given to the Corinthians by Christ Jesus. Because of this they "were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge." This leads to him saying that this was "even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." The Pulpit Commentary says that "the genitive is thus objective (about Christ), not subjective (the testimony borne by Christ)." In this manner then, the Christian testimony was, in fact, confirmed in those in Corinth.

The apostles, particularly Paul, passed on the message of Christ through preaching and instruction to the Corinthians and it was confirmed through signs. However, we will see in the chapters ahead that they abused the signs and made what was given in honor to look childish and demeaning. Because of this, Paul had to give explicit instructions concerning gifts, particularly the gift of "tongues." To this day, charismatic and Pentecostal churches continue to demean these gifts, ignoring the very instructions breathed out by the Holy Spirit through Paul.

As God will never contradict Himself, then any supposed gift which doesn't correspond to the instructions He has given in His word cannot be a "gift" from the Holy Spirit at all. We must pay particular heed to the instructions concerning these things as they come in the chapters ahead. Christianity is to be a "Christ-centered" religion, not a "look-at-me-centered" one. He is Lord, we are His subjects.

Life application: What change was wrought in you when you came to Christ? Hopefully you will remember that He is the one who deserves the glory for having saved your soul and confirmed it through a noticeable change in you. Remember to always glorify His great name in all you do.

... so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ... 1 Corinthians 1:7

This verse is still continuing on with the same basic thought that Paul has been making for the past three verses. The grace of God was given to the Corinthians by Christ Jesus. Because of this they "were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge." This led to "even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you."

Because the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them, through their conversion to a new life in Him, it ensured that they would "come short in no gift." The term "come short" is used in connection with the thought of verse 5 where Paul said they "were enriched in everything by Him." Because they (and we also as believers) are so enriched, there will be no deficiency or lack in any "gift."

The term "gift" is *charismati* and doesn't only imply miraculous gifts, such as speaking in various languages, healings, and etc., but instead is certainly speaking of a sound and proper Christian walk. It includes right knowledge, right application of that knowledge, sound conduct, harmony between believers, etc. That it isn't speaking only of miraculous gifts is certain based on the contents of the rest of the epistle.

To conclude this verse, he ties in this fullness of what Christ offers during our lives as sufficient to carry us through until the end as we are "eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." In other words, be it a day or be it an entire lifetime of waiting (which has now gone on for 2000 years) we are fully gifted in our lives to endure and continue on in a full and complete manner as we wait on His return.

However, as we will see ahead, despite being so gifted, the Corinthians failed to properly apply what was available to them. Hence, Paul wrote this letter for correction, instruction, and reproof. If this letter to them was given as such a guide, how much more ready should we be for each difficulty that arises? We have the whole word of God available to us! If we would simply take the time to read it and apply it to our lives, we would be living in a manner worthy of that great name to which we have been called.

Life application: The Bible is given to instruct us and to enrich our walk with the Lord until He returns for us. In it is everything we need for our spiritual journey. And yet, we ignore it and expect to be filled through shallow sermons one hour a week. This is a great error. Our filling comes through knowing our God, knowing our God comes through knowing Jesus Christ, and knowing Jesus Christ only comes through knowing the Bible. Study your Bible!

...who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Corinthians 1:8

This finishes up the long thought which began in verse 4. Since then, Paul:

1. Thanked God for His grace given to them by Christ Jesus
2. This grace would enrich them in everything; by all utterance and knowledge
3. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them
4. So that they would lack no gift as they awaited the revelation of Christ

And it is He, Jesus Christ, "who will also confirm you to the end." This is another of the multitude of verses concerning "eternal salvation." Despite our own weaknesses, we shall be confirmed to the end. We have been given God's grace to help us along the way, but even if we should fall and fail to act upon the gifts

we have been given, we will still be "confirmed." We are established in Christ and it is He, not us, who bears the ability to continue us in Him "to the end."

As we live, or in our death, we belong to Jesus Christ as Lord. No power in heaven or on earth can remove us from our position, granted by grace through the exercising of our faith. It is this act which then shows us to "be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Greek word *anegkletous* is used for "blameless." This word indicates a judicial standing. Though we may fall into sin, the sin will not be counted against us. Because we have moved from Adam to Christ, we are in Him and free from blame and condemnation. In essence, there is no charge of crime because of our position in Him.

This doesn't mean, and the Bible never promotes, that we should willingly sin. We are to conduct ourselves in holiness and righteousness. The church has the right to take action against those who flagrantly and openly flaunt sin as will be seen in Chapter 5. But in that chapter, using an actual case of open disobedience, Paul never questions the salvation of the sinner. Rather, he assumes that his salvation is secure. However, he will suffer judgment and trouble in this world at the hand of Satan so that his "spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Corinthians 1:5.

This "day of our Lord Jesus Christ," which is also referred to in that passage in 1 Corinthians 5, is the day when we will stand before Him and receive our judgment for deeds in the flesh, but it is just that - a judgment of rewards and losses; not one for condemnation or salvation.

Life application: Salvation is eternal. We are saved despite ourselves. However, we will face many trials and troubles in this life if we fail to live up to the

standards which Christ has set in His word for us. We will also suffer loss when we face Him at the bema-seat of judgment. How much better to live rightly, uphold His standards, and persevere in Him now. By doing so, our life will be rich and full and our judgment will be one of great reward.