

## The Riches of Your Salvation [Slide 1] 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Read “The Mystery of the Missing Owner.” You might ask yourself how could people not know or forget the wealth they possess?. However many of us do the same thing with the spiritual wealth we possess. We either don’t know or have forgotten the riches found in our own salvation. Paul begins the letter of 1 Corinthians by reminding the Corinthians of the wealth God has bestowed on them in Christ Jesus.

You will want to turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians chapter one, verses 1-9. 1 Corinthians is the seventh book in the New Testament after the four Gospels, Acts, and Romans.

While you are turning there, I’ll share with you some of the important information about this letter. The apostle Paul is the author. He writes to a church he founded. The city of Corinth was a large cosmopolitan Greek city about fifty miles west of Athens. It was one of the largest cities in the Roman Empire and lay on a major trade route. Corinth also had a reputation of being one of the most wicked cities of ancient times, full of immorality, degradation, and thousands of temple prostitutes.

Paul had written at least one previous letter to them, a letter he refers to in 1 Corinthians 5:9. We don’t have that letter. It evidently wasn’t inspired by the Holy Spirit. I call 1 Corinthians the Dear Abby letter of the New Testament because the letter is organized around answering questions the Corinthians had written to Paul. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the Spring of 55 AD while he was ministering in Ephesus.

As we go through this letter you will discover that the church was an odd combination of being blessed beyond measure with spiritual gifts including the spectacular ones of prophecy and speaking in tongues, but also arguably was the most carnal congregation to which Paul wrote. He even describes the Corinthian Christians as people of flesh and mere babes in Christ in chapter 3 verse 1.

Most of 1 Corinthians is an example of what not to do and how not to live together as a body of Christ. This is definitely one New Testament church we never want to become like. The letter teaches a lot of practical things mostly about what to avoid, so if you don’t want to learn the same hard lessons the Corinthians did, learning from this letter can save you a lot of grief.

As we go through the letter, from time to time I’ll share more historical and cultural background that will help explain some of the things we read. But for now, what we need to know is that Paul is writing to a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus who need some help getting things straightened out.

Before Paul begins tackling their problems, he wants to remind them of the riches they possess in Christ, the resources and the truths they will need to know to fortify themselves for the necessary changes they need to make in their church. He does that in verses 1-9. I’m going to read the passage and then we will work our way through it. Read.

In verse 1 Paul refers to himself as one that God called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. He also notes that Sosthenes is with him. This introduction is different from most of Paul’s letters and probably reflects the tension between Paul and the Corinthians. Paul spends time later in this letter defending himself as an apostle and several times in the letter Paul says things that indicate that a sizable faction in Corinth probably wanted to ignore him or dispute his instructions.

In most of his letters Paul describes himself as a bond slave of Christ. Here he refers to himself as an apostle called by God, emphasizing his divine authority. The Sosthenes here is probably the same ruler of the synagogue in Corinth who was beaten by the Romans in Acts 18:17. If that is the case, then Sosthenes probably converted to Christ under Paul's ministry and would be a respected leader who endorsed Paul's ministry to the Corinthians. Subtly, Paul has introduced both God and Sosthenes as endorsers of his role as apostle to the Corinthians. Sosthenes must have decided to go minister with Paul when he left Corinth.

Paul describes in verses 2-9 all that God has done for the Corinthians and that will be the focus of our attention because what God did for the Corinthians he has also done for you if you are a believer in Jesus Christ.

[Slide 2] So, what has God done for you? First, he sanctified you in Christ Jesus. In verse 2 Paul describes the Corinthians as those sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to deliver them are Christians. Christians are sanctified in Christ Jesus and are saints by God's calling.

Let me explain what that means. The word, "sanctify" means "set apart" and in the New Testament it refers to someone who has been set apart to God. They have been set apart to be with God, to serve God, to represent God. Anyone who associates with God has to be holy, so the word sanctify has the connotation also of "make holy." In fact, the word sanctify, the word holy, and the word saint all come from the same Greek word, *hagios*. That is why we are also saints by calling.

Understand that when you trusted Jesus Christ to save you, at that moment God sanctified you and set you apart for his glory. He also justified you or declared you to be righteous. Now we all know that we did not suddenly become perfect in all our ways. You are positionally righteous and sanctified. God relates to you as if you were completely holy. He still expects you to confess and turn away from your sins, but he welcomes you into his presence as a saint. That is your identity. You are a saint by God's call.

You are not identified by your sins, even your prevailing sins. You are not a liar. You are a saint who struggles with the sin of lying. You are not a homosexual. You are a saint tempted by same sex desire. You are not a gossip. You are a saint who struggles with the sin of gossip. The Bible does not call you to become something. It calls you to live out what you already are. For example, after spending the first three chapters in the book of Ephesians, detailing the depth of our salvation, Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

You are a saint, so live like one. You have been set apart for God, so live like you're set apart for God. The Catholic Church has done a great disservice to the Bible's use of the word saint by teaching that only certain, special Christians are saints when, contrary to that, the Bible teaches in this very verse that all who call upon Jesus are saints by God's calling. God sanctified you in Christ Jesus.

[Slide 3] The second thing God did for you was to bestow favor on you and make peace with you. Paul writes in verse 3, "Read." God's grace is his favor freely given to you without you deserving or earning it. Read CS Lewis card about comparative religions. All other religions teach that you must work your way to Heaven. Christianity teaches that God did all the work on the cross for you and you merely have to receive eternal life as a gift from him.

CS Lewis was well-acquainted with God's grace. He described in graphic and poetic terms how God graciously saved him. He writes, "Read Lewis testimony."

God also made peace with us. We were his enemies, in war against him. God offered us peace through the death of Jesus Christ. He laid down his holy demand for justice the moment we called out to Jesus for mercy. We are reconciled to God now, no longer enemies, but friends. You received grace and peace from God.

[Slide 4] The third thing God did for you was to enrich you with spiritual gifts. Paul writes extensively on this point in verses 4-7 because the Corinthians were wonderfully blessed in this area, but probably also needed to act more in a manner worthy of their calling. The Corinthians were made rich in speaking gifts such as prophecy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues as well as in gifts of knowledge such as the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge.

Verse 6, the presence of the multitude of spiritual gifts confirmed that they had received the testimony about Jesus Christ and had been saved.

According to Paul in verse 7 the Corinthians were not lacking in any spiritual gift. They abounded in the quantity and variety of spiritual gifts as they waited for the revelation of Jesus or his Second Coming. The connection of the two thoughts of spiritual gifts and the Second Coming probably comes from Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-21 where he linked the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost to what will happen in the last days right before the Second Coming of Jesus. As far as the Corinthians knew, Jesus could come back at any moment. So, the abundance of spiritual gifts in their midst, including the more supernatural ones, may have caused them to expect Jesus' return at any moment.

We're all supposed to glorify God. We are all supposed to share our faith with others. We are all supposed to serve, but how we do those things is connected very much to how God has wired and designed us, including the types of gifts he has given us.

God has given you one or more spiritual gifts. They are for the edification of the body of Christ, but they are also a blessing to you. This is how you act as a channel between the powerful God and the needs of human beings. As you serve in your areas of giftedness, God uses you to change and transform lives. He uses you to advance his Kingdom and his Gospel. He uses you as His way of meeting peoples' needs. You partner with God to do something significant. Listen to this modern day parable. Read story of house painter. God enriched you with spiritual gifts.

[Slide 5] The fourth thing God did for you was to ensure your complete deliverance from sin. Verse 8, he will confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will have no guilt when we meet Jesus. All our sin will be paid for. God will remove all sin from us. Everything wrong will be wiped clean. Note that it is God who will establish us blameless, not us. Our deliverance from all sin depends upon God not upon us. That is why it is so important that verse 9 begins with the words, God is faithful. Our deliverance depends on God's faithfulness, not on our own faithfulness, for which all the saints exclaimed, "Amen!" God will ensure your complete deliverance from sin.

[Slide 6] One final thing God did for you is he called you into fellowship with Jesus Christ. We have been granted the privilege of being a friend of Jesus, of having a relationship with our Lord and Savior, of us conversing together. On his last night with his disciples before his arrest Jesus said these words to his disciples in John 15:15, "Read." Friendship or fellowship is predicated on open communication. With Jesus, true friendship is also predicated on righteousness. We don't share with him in sin or ungodliness. We share in what is good and honorable and pure. Joseph Stowell, in his book, Following Christ describes our fellowship with Christ this way: Read card.

In the letter of 1 John chapter 1 verses 6-7 the apostle John writes, “Read.” We have holy fellowship with Jesus. You have fellowship with Jesus Christ. What a privilege that we creatures should have a relationship with the King of kings and Lord of lords. You get to talk with Almighty God and be his companion. He wants to talk with you. He wants to spend time with you. How amazing is that! What God has done for us is mind-blowing.

Paul’s list of what God has done for you is not exhaustive. God has done more than this for you in salvation, but this is enough to give thanks. He has sanctified you in Christ Jesus. He has bestowed favor on you and made peace with you. He has enriched you with spiritual gifts. He ensures your complete deliverance from sin. He has called you into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Can we just thank God together? I invite you to pray along with me. Close in prayer.