

## INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles please to 1 Corinthians as we begin the study through this epistle that the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. An epistle is not the wife of an apostle, as some people think. An epistle is a letter that is written, in this case, to the church at Corinth. It was a church with a lot of problems. It was a blessed church, but it was also a problem church. And we're going to find in our study God's answers for problems in the church.

There's no such thing as a perfect church. If you find a perfect church, don't you dare join it. Because, then it would no longer be perfect. Sometimes we fantasize that the New Testament churches, whether it's the church in Jerusalem or the church in Philippi, the church in Thessalonica, the church in Ephesus, or the church in Corinth, were perfect because they were closer to the apostolic age.

But all you have to do is read the New Testament to find out they had big problems. Paul has to address numerous problems: There was sexual immorality in the church. They had church members suing other church members. And it got so bad in the church that when they went to have the Lord's Supper, some of them were getting drunk and weren't waiting on anyone else. They were also charismatic and had a lot of problems with spiritual gifts. Speaking in tongues was also a real problem in this church. They didn't understand the truth about the second coming of Jesus Christ and of their own resurrection, so Paul had to address that also.

We'll begin by addressing the perks of the Christian life. Those of you in the business world know what a perk is. It's an abbreviation of the word "perquisite." A perquisite is "a privilege, a profit, a gain that is additional to salaries and wages." In other words, in the business world you get your basic salary or your basic wages and then you may get some perks. You may get a corner office with a view. You may get a company car. You may get access to the company's country club membership or the skybox at Cowboys' stadium. In the Christian life there are some basic truths and basic blessings that come with it. For example, when you become a Christian, your sins are forgiven, your name is written down in heaven, and you have a home in heaven. All of those are just some of the basics. But in 1 Corinthians we're going to see some of the perks and bonuses of the Christian life.

The thing I like about letters in the New Testament is the writer of the letter always puts his name first. Not long ago, I received a 67-page handwritten letter. That's a record. I had to go all the way to the back of the letter to find out who sent it. So, I like the way they do it in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 (NIV). "Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes\*, To the Church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony about Christ was confirmed

in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong till the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”

\* The mailman who delivered the letter

I have a book in my library written by a Scottish Christian named James Stewart and the title of that book is simply *In Christ*, because Paul uses that expression, “in Christ,” 164 times in his letter. It’s easier for us to understand what it means for Christ to be in us and that this is a blessing. But, he is emphasizing in this passage not that Christ is in us, but that we are in Christ. There are three perks of the Christian life.

## **I. OUR POSITION IN CHRIST**

Scripture tells us that in Christ Jesus we received two special blessings. First, we are sanctified in Christ. Paul is writing to the church of God. Every church belongs to God. But, this particular church was located in Corinth. In the early days of the church, there were no divisions of denominations. All the Christians in one city were considered the church in Corinth. And, although we have different denominations today, the same is true. All the Body of Christ in Tyler, Texas is the church in Tyler. It’s all the believers.

### **A. We are sanctified in Christ.**

Verse 2 says, “To those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” What does the word “sanctified” mean? We throw around some of these 50-cent words in the Christian life. We say, “Well, I’ve been justified. I’ve been sanctified, and, one of these days, bless God, I’m going to be glorified.” But we don’t really know what those words mean.

The word “sanctified” is greatly misunderstood. There are some who believe in what’s called instant sanctification where they say they reach a state of sinless perfection. It’s as if light comes down from heaven, and suddenly never again will they ever commit a sin. That’s not what I believe, and that’s not what the apostle Paul believed, because even though Paul had been a Christian for many years we find that Paul still struggles with sin in his life. He said, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate I do.” (Romans 7:15 NIV)

No, the apostle Paul taught that sanctification was a process. We are being sanctified in Christ right now. What does it mean to be in Christ? Can you visualize what it means for you to be in Christ? Let me explain in a very simple way. You’re walking down a hot, dusty, dry road on a summer afternoon. You’re thirsty, you’re sweating, you’re tired, and suddenly an automobile pulls up behind you and stops. Somebody inside that car opens the door and says, “Why don’t you get in?” And so you say, “Well, that’s a good idea.” You get inside the car and continue down the road. But this time the car is air-conditioned and it’s cool and there are refreshments.

You were on the path walking alone, but then you got in the car on the same path and there was a lot of benefit from being in the car. That's really what it means to be in Christ. No longer are you trying to do it alone. You are in Christ and He is the one who is sustaining you. What does it mean to be sanctified? The best definition of the word "sanctified" I've ever found is this: You are sanctified when you are being used for the purpose for which you were created.

Let me illustrate that. When you sit in a pew, you are sanctifying that pew right then, because church pews were created for people to sit in them. Did you know you could walk in a church on Monday morning at 10:00 a.m. and the place will be empty? You could say, "Those pews aren't being sanctified." You know why? They are not being used for the purpose for which they were designed. But, when you are sitting in them, they're being sanctified.

An automobile out in the parking lot is not being sanctified at this moment, because an automobile was never designed and built to just sit still and fill up a space in a parking lot. What was the car designed for? To move you from point A to point B. When you get in your car and drive somewhere, as you're driving your car you are sanctifying the car. You understand? You are using it for the purpose for which it was designed.

God designed you for a specific purpose. When He is using us for that purpose, that's when we are being sanctified. There are a lot of things you do that are not sanctified. Right? You better believe it. I don't have to name them.

However, there are a lot of things you can do in the Christian life and you know when you are doing them, that that's the purpose for which you were created. For instance, when you praise the Lord, did you know you were being sanctified? That's what the Bible says. He created us. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9 NIV) So, when you are praising the Lord, you're being sanctified. That's one reason He created you.

When you open the Bible and study it, you are being sanctified, because He said, "Study to show yourself approved." (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV) When you're witnessing for Christ, when you are serving Him, when you are giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name, when you're doing all those things He tells you to do, that's when you are being sanctified in Christ Jesus. That's one of the benefits of being in Christ.

## **B. We are saints in Christ.**

But, there's another one. The Bible says. "We are called to be holy." That is the word *hagios* in the Greek language, which means "saints." Who are the saints? If you say the New Orleans professional football team, you fail. If you say, "People who have been canonized by the Roman Catholic Church," you fail. The New Testament teaches the glorious fact that you and I are not going to *become* saints; you and I *are* saints right now.

As I have said before, either you are a saint, or you ain't. There are only two kinds of people in

the world. Those who are born-again and those who aren't. For many years, Dr. Harry Ironsides was a pastor at Moody Bible Church in Chicago. One day he was riding on a train with a couple of dear Catholic nuns and they were talking about spiritual things. And, he asked them, "Have you ever met a saint?" They said, "Oh, no, we've never met a saint." And he said, "Well, would you like to meet a saint?" They nodded. Harry Ironsides then said, "Well, here I am. I'm St. Harry."

That's true in one sense, but you also need to understand that in the New Testament, although we are called saints in the plural, no one is ever called a singular saint. Nowhere is that found in the Bible. So, what does that mean? A saint is not a saint without other saints. The Bible says, "We are called to be holy saints together with all of those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." We are in this thing together.

What is a saint? When you get the idea of a saint, sometimes we use that in the pejorative sense. We think a saint is a goody two-shoes or somebody who goes around wearing a backward collar or never wears makeup or something like that. But saints are just ordinary Christians. Saints go home and watch stupid television show sometimes. They put bumper stickers on their cars that say, "Have you hugged your dog today?" They go out and eat barbecue. Saints are normal people. And so, you're not some super-perfect person to be a saint. All you are is called by Jesus Christ and set apart.

We are sanctified in Christ Jesus and we are holy in Christ Jesus. I can ask you what your position is, but that's not always the same as your performance. In other words, I could go up to some guy wearing a football uniform, and ask, "Hey, what position do you play?" And, he could say, "Well, I'm a quarterback." Now, he may be third string. He may be a substitute. Or, he may be all-state. Just by telling me his position, he's not indicating the level of his performance. Every Christian is a saint and is *positioned* in Christ Jesus. But, that doesn't necessarily mean that you are *performing* to the level of expectation of our Lord.

## II. OUR PROSPERITY THROUGH CHRIST

The second truth in this passage of scripture teaches our prosperity through Jesus. I've chosen that word intentionally. You may have heard about some of these prosperity preachers preaching and health and wealth. I chose that word because of the word in verse 5 where Paul says, "For, in him, you have been enriched," made rich. That is the Greek word *ploutos*. We get our word "plutocrat" from that. A plutocrat is someone considered wealthy; somebody who goes first class all the way. Paul is saying, "Listen, I want to tell you one of the perks of the Christian life is you have prosperity through Christ Jesus." Whether or not you know it, if you are Christian, you are rich.

Am I talking about financial wealth? What does it mean to be rich financially? To be rich financially, all it requires is to have all your needs met and the capacity to enjoy life. If all of your needs are being met and you have the capacity to enjoy life, you are as rich as any man in this world ever needs to be. Amen? I guarantee you most people in America are rich in that definition.

## **A. We are rich in grace.**

But, it's talking about much more than just financial riches. 2 Corinthians 8:9 is a beautiful burst of Scripture that speaks of our wealth in Christ Jesus. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."

The Bible says Jesus Christ gave up the riches in eternity that He possessed and He took on human form. He became a servant and became poor for our sakes. Why? He did it so you can become rich. First, we are rich in grace. There are 116 times in his epistles where Paul uses the term "grace." What does the word mean? G-R-A-C-E is an acrostic for God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Grace is God giving you a second chance. It is God giving you a third chance. It is God giving you a fourth chance. It is God not giving you what you deserve, but what you need.

I deserve to spend eternity separated from God in hell forever and ever because I was born a sinner. And, I sinned against God. I am a sinner by nature and by choice. But, you know what Christ did for me? In his grace, God said, "Listen, David, I know you deserve to go to hell. But, I'm going to take your punishment upon my Son and, instead, I'm going to forgive your sins and give you eternal life." That's what grace is.

That is so unlike the world. The world cuts you off as soon as you make one mistake. Recently I read about a naval exercise that took place in the Atlantic Ocean. The admiral gave the command for all the ships traveling in the fleet to turn to starboard. This means to the right. But there was one captain who got confused and he gave the wrong command. This is unthinkable. He commanded his ship to turn to port, and they barely avoided a collision. The admiral, knowing his captain had made a terrible, career-ending mistake, asked the captain, "Sir, what are your intentions?" And, the captain saluted and said, "Sir, my intentions are to buy a farm." He knew his Navy career was over.

That's true in a lot of areas of life. You make one mistake and you've blown it. That's it for you. But, God's grace doesn't cut you off after one mistake. Isn't that good to know? God's grace saves you and God's grace sustains you. How much grace do you have? You have more than you need. You are rich in grace. Verse 4 says, "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."

## **B. We are rich in gifts.**

In verse 7 Paul says, "Therefore, you do not lack any spiritual gift." This church was a gifted church. The bible lists spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and some also noted in 1 Peter. About 18 different spiritual gifts are mentioned in the New Testament. God has given to every born-again believer one or more spiritual gifts. He gives His children supernatural ability so they can serve Him and so they can minister to others for Him.

God does that in the world of nature, too. Animals have certain equipment so they can exist in their surroundings. A bat, for example, can't see, so God has equipped them with echolocation

so they can use sound to navigate. A bat will squeak to hear that sound reflected back from a solid surface so it won't run into walls. That's what God has done to us. When He saves us, He says, "I'm going to equip you and give you some special gifts."

No one has all the spiritual gifts, and the Bible says there's not one spiritual gift that everyone has. The gifts are various. He gives several however He will. You have some gifts that I don't have, and I have some spiritual gifts that you don't have and that's why we need each other. That's how we make up the Body of Christ, because we all need each other. Being gifted is not the same as being godly. You can be gifted, and you can be ungodly. That happened at Corinth. They had more spiritual gifts than any church in the New Testament. But, the good news is that God has gifted you and wants you to accept those gifts and use them.

What if you don't know what your gifts are? I believe the moment that you're born again, God gives you your spiritual gifts. But, you may not uncover them until a little bit later in your spiritual life. You may have to grow to a point where you can use them. It's kind of like when you bring a baby home from the hospital. That baby cannot walk, but it has all the equipment needs. When the baby starts trying to walk, you don't have to take it back to the hospital and say, "Okay doctor, I need some legs on this thing now." That baby already has the ability within it to drive an 18-wheeler. But, you don't dare put him behind the wheel of a semi when he's three months old. Disaster. That baby has the ability to learn how to fly a Boeing 747, but you don't dare put him in the cockpit of a jet when he's little. He has to learn those things. Those abilities have to be brought out. The same is true with your spiritual gifts.

### **III. OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST**

Verses 8-9 says, "He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice He didn't say you will be sinless.

When the Bible speaks of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, it means all that is included in the end times when Jesus comes to rapture the church. It's talking about a time of tribulation that occurs when the battle of Armageddon happens. All of that is encapsulated in the Day of Jesus Christ when He is revealed.

Before you can understand verse 9, I want you to understand a little English grammar. The subject of verse 9 is God. The verb and the direct object is "faithful." That's the basic idea in verse 9: God is faithful. That's what you need to understand. He's called all of us into *koinonia*, which means partnership with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. It's often translated "fellowship" in the Bible. We have *koinonia* with each other and that's great. But, the Bible says not only do we have *koinonia* with each other, we can also have *koinonia* with Jesus Christ. You are in partnership with Him.

What does it mean to be in a partnership? Some people have a business and it is called a sole proprietorship, meaning one person is the boss and he or she calls all the shots. That's not the same thing as a partnership. God never intended you to carry on a spiritual sole proprietorship. He never intended you to call all the shots in your spiritual life. He says, "I want you to have a

partnership. I want you to link up with My Son Jesus Christ." That's how you can really succeed in the Christian life.

### **A. Surrender our independence.**

What are some characteristics of a good partnership? Number one, when we're in a partnership, we surrender our independence. In other words, we no longer can say, "I'm going to make all the decisions." Instead, you say to your partner, "Is there something we need to talk about? We need to share together."

So, in the Christian life when you are functioning in a partnership with Jesus Christ, you're saying, "Lord, I'm not calling the shots. I am not making the decisions." If you are truly in partnership with Jesus Christ, you'll never make a decision without first consulting your partner, Jesus. But how many times do we do the opposite of that day in and day out? "Oh, I'm just going to decide this for myself," we say. Before you vote in an election, you need to ask Jesus. Before you buy a car, you want to ask Jesus. Before you buy a house, you want to ask Jesus. Before you change jobs, you want to ask Jesus. Young people, before you go out on a date with somebody, you need to ask Jesus, "What do you think about this, Jesus?" Stop making decisions for yourself.

### **B. Spend time with the partner.**

The second characteristic of a partnership is that you spend time with the partner. It's not much of a partnership if you don't spend time together. Spiritually-speaking, every day at least once a day you need to set up a time where you and your partner discuss the business. And, what is the business? Living the Christian life. That's why it is absolutely essential for you to have a quiet time every day with Jesus because He's your partner. You are in *koinonia* with Him. So, you need say, "Lord, speak to me." and, open the word and listen. Then, you need to talk to Him and pray and spend time with Him.

### **C. Keep our "part" of the partnership.**

Third, we need to keep up our part of the partnership. In other words, we must be responsible for our part of it. And, what is that? The Bible says we are co-laborers together with God. He may be the managing partner, but we are the only feet Jesus has on earth. We are the only hands Jesus has on earth. And so, as Jesus directs us, it is our job to minister His name.

During a time of economic crisis in England, the leaders went to the Prime Minister, Oliver Cromwell, and said, "We are running out of silver cement for coins." And, Oliver Cromwell said, "Well, in the churches, are there silver statues of saints?" They replied, "Yes." He said, "Melt down the saints because they ought to be put into circulation." What a great spiritual truth. We as the Saints of God and partners with Jesus Christ ought to be out in circulation ministering in the name of Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

I read an interesting article the other day in *Guidepost Magazine* about Damon Wilson. He played Lamont on the television show "Sanford and Son." At the height of his success on that program he said, "I lived in a 27-room house, I drove a Rolls-Royce, I had a fat bank account, I had fame, but I also had a failing marriage and a \$1,000 a week cocaine habit. I was dying from loneliness." He said in his desperation, he called out to Jesus Christ and was saved.

In fact, he's come up with a new name. He now calls himself Johnny Jesus Seed, because he goes around planting seeds for the Lord. He said, "I'm just a nobody telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody." I think that's the message we need to preach. We may be nobodies, but we need to be telling everybody about Somebody who can save anybody.



## OUTLINE

### I. OUR POSITION IN CHRIST

"To the Church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours." vs. 2

- A. We are sanctified in Christ.
- B. We are saints in Christ.

### II. OUR PROSPERITY THROUGH CHRIST

"For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge." vs. 5

- A. We are rich in grace.
- B. We are rich in gifts.

### III. OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH CHRIST

He will keep you strong till the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. vs. 8

- In Koinonia (partnership) we:
- A. Surrender our independence.
  - B. Spend time with the Partner.
  - C. Keep our "part" of the partnership.

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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