

It is a strange thing to hear of people talk of the love of God as they show by word and deed that they have no conception at all of the depths of what such thing truly means. This lack of understanding is primarily revealed in thankless language and thankless deeds devoid of the humility and gratitude that rightly befit the nature of the liberty which is purchased at the exceedingly high cost of the death of God’s Son. If you want to truly grow in grace and gratitude, then don’t listen to those who see God’s love as something which costs nothing, but surround yourself with those whom, though agony of sorrow and the dark nights of the soul have faced the awful truth of the guilt of sin, and have come with trembling wonder to the holy feet of the One on whom all Creation hang to see the miracle of miracles: God graced sinners with His eternal Son to stand in their stead to bear our curse, die our death, and reign in Hell at His own expense. This deep grace always leads to gratitude which swallows up the fearful heart with the enormity of the faithfulness of the gracious God. In this we hope, and in this we labor, and in this we rejoice, for God is faithful, so I will thank Him as my eyes are fixed upon the glories of the vicarious sacrifice and sovereignty of His Son.

This is that into which the apostle roots his gratitude. He is not thankful because the Corinthians are faithful, but he overflows with gratitude because God is faithful. To this end, as we see the glorious grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we, too, will overflow with thanksgiving and hope in the infinite depths of His mercy, greater than all our wickedness. Let’s look at how Paul begins to address the mess of Corinth with great hope.

1. Grace Leads to Gratitude

- a. Thanks goes to God, not the Corinthians
 - i. Grace flows from God and Peace with God is established as the result of His Grace
 1. Paul replaces the common greeting *Chairein* (Rejoice) with *Charis* (Grace) as a radically richer greeting for the Church
 - a. GRACE – God’s Rewards At Christ’s Expense
 2. *Shalom* (Peace) was the normative Jewish greeting, but rather than merely expressed as a wish, it is a certain outworking of God’s grace towards those who belong to Him in His Son
 - ii. Both come from God our Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ
 1. Grace is the cause of our belonging and Peace is the result of our union with Christ
 2. All of this comes from God, so Paul thanks God.
- b. Thanks always has an object (God here) and a reason:
 - i. He has given grace to you in Christ Jesus
 1. Note the double emphatic on grace
 - a. “given” and “grace”
 2. The primary reason for Paul’s gratitude to God is the grace given by God, from God, to the Corinthians in His Son
 - a. It is this union, seen by the apostle as a gift of God performed by God according to the will and kind intention of God, that is the most glorious and foundational grace
 - c. This grace this then expounded further:
 - i. He has enriched you in all things
 1. Made you wealthy, abundant, without lack
 2. There is no gift lacking communally in His Church

- a. We have communal fullness in the Church because God has graced us with an abundance of necessary gifts
 - b. Sometimes we try to start a ministry because it has ‘worked’ among other believers, but without a thoughtful consideration to what God has given our local body in regards to gifting
 - i. We tend to think that we need to be “active”, i.e. busy doing something, but we need to consider why we are doing what we are doing
 - ii. Remember that God is not working for our proclivity to activity, but for the surety of our maturity
 - c. If we believe that God has given us everything and every gift which we need to fulfill His purpose, then we should start with what we have and work out way out from there to functional ministry
3. Every gift is given by God and every member of Jesus Christ’s Church is interdependent upon the gifts that He has given to others so that together we lack nothing necessary to glorify God and enjoy Him forever
- a. This “not lacking” is **1 John 3:1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (1Jo 3:1 ESV)not an individual statement, obviously, but a communal one
 - b. Thus, we are interdependent upon one another to be strengthened and built up in the knowledge of Christ both in ascertaining and applying His will
 - c. No gift is unnecessary, nor any gift missing, from the local church
4. All this “wealth” of gifting comes “in Him” and, therefore, leaves no room for boasting or dishonoring one another
- a. 1:21 – “let him who boasts, boast in the Lord”
 - b. This grace is the root of unity and cure for disunity
 - i. No church belongs to Paul (the great apostle), or Apollos (the gifted preacher), or Peter (the original disciple), etc.
 - ii. The Church belongs to God and is built by Christ Jesus according to His grace and is empowered by His Holy Spirit
- ii. This wealth of gifts came to the Corinthians in two primary powerful giftings
1. Speaking gifts – “all word”
 - a. Prophecy – 13:2
 - b. Teaching – 12:28
 - c. Tongues – 13:1
 - d. Evangelism
 2. Knowledge gifts – “all knowledge”
 - a. Wisdom – 12:8
 - b. Insight of ‘mysteries’ – 13:2
 - c. Discernment – 12:8
 3. The word is the Truth proclaimed and knowledge is the Truth apprehended and applied

- a. The Corinthian church was strong in these things: teaching, preaching, and interpretation.
 - b. They had been taught by gifted people and were gifted for such use to the Lord
 - i. They were missing some important things (love!), yet Paul is thankful for what the Lord has gifted to them for the edification of the church
- iii. These gifts give evidence of God's grace and the apprehension and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - 1. "just as the testimony of Christ was established in you"
 - 2. The Gospel was proclaimed, apprehended, and believed upon
 - a. This was evidence of the Holy Spirit:
 - b. Repentance, Faith, exchanged allegiance, evidences of the grace of God
 - 3. This truth: they believed the testimony of Christ and stretched their philosophies and wisdoms and knowledge upon it
 - a. This truth led to "so that they were lacking in no gift"
 - b. Our functional reliance upon the word about Christ Jesus (testimony) gives cause for the abundance of gifts among us *because God is the giver of all things*
- iv. Seeing Jesus is the motivation by which we exercise these gifts for the sake of others
 - 1. We "eagerly await" *the revelation* of Jesus
 - a. It's not just that He is returning, but that we will see Him as He is, which motivates our hearts to work hard for His honor now
 - i. The Church finds courage and wisdom not in God showing us future events, but in God showing us the glory of His Son.
 - 1. This is why the book is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" and not "The Revelation of Future Events".
 - ii. We need to see Jesus Himself and all is right
 - b. For when He is revealed, we will be made like Him, and the testimony of Christ will be further confirmed and established without any inkling of sin or doubt or fear
 - 2. The church which is eagerly awaiting His return, to "see him" (revelation), does not lack in any gift
 - a. There is a correlation of the desire and expectation to see Jesus and the exercise of the gifts given to the church by God
 - i. The gifts are used to glorify Christ, to point one another to Him, to build up dependence upon Him, to see the Truth of His work, person, and reign throughout all of life
 - b. We use these gifts rightly *when our eyes are upon Him and His glorious return*
 - i. Do we spend time pondering His return? His glory? His reign?
 - ii. Have we meditated upon that glorious day as revealed in the Word and according to his promise?
 - iii. We would do well to fix our eyes and our constant attention to His promises, so that the grace which God has poured upon us is invested to its fullness among us and grows the fruit consistent with what will be revealed on that Day

2. God's Faithfulness is the Foundation of Our Gratitude

- a. Our hope is not in the evidence of the gifts, but in the surety of God's promise
 - i. He will surely establish us blameless on the Day of His return
 1. HE WILL DO IT
 - a. There is great hope here, not in our ability to exercise our gifts perfectly, nor in our ability to love perfectly, nor in our ability to do anything
 2. He will establish us blameless
 - a. Blameless! – "without cause for blame or accusation"
 - ii. No revelation of the horrific depths of wickedness in your heart, your head, or your soul, can keep God from accomplishing His purpose
 1. No sin is too evil for God to lose His establishment
 2. No thought is too heinous for God to lose His founding of your soul blameless
 3. No weakness is too overcoming of you for God to lose His grip on that Day
 - iii. **FOR YOU WILL BE ESTABLISHED BLAMELESS IN HIM**
 1. You are united to Christ Jesus, by faith, and thus are secure on the Day of His return
 - a. You are not saved by God's grace, through faith, and then kept by your effort or works or gifting
 - b. You are established by God's grace, through faith in His Son, period!
 - i. Not the perfection of your faith, but the perfection of the object of your mustard seed faith: Jesus the Righteous
 2. It is not your perfection, but His, which guarantees your blamelessness, so that God can call you such on that Day – He Is Blameless in My Son!
- b. Thus, it is God who is faithful, and His faithfulness which gives the apostle great hope and fills him with great gratitude
 - i. It is not the Corinthians' power or greatness or purity or functional blamelessness (there was much to blame!)
 - ii. It is God's faithfulness and God's work of establishing fellowship in His Son by sheer and utter grace, a gift all of God's working and God's establishment and God's delight, which gives cause for such gratitude
 1. Paul was not encouraged by the perfection, or even the goodness, of the Corinthians
 2. Paul was encouraged because God is faithful.
 - a. It was God who enriched them in all things
 - b. It was God who established the testimony of Christ in them
 - c. It was God who promised to establish them blameless
 - d. It was God who called them into fellowship with His Son
- c. We have been called into "fellowship" with God's Son by God Himself, who is faithful
 - i. Fellowship – sharing, participation, belonging to one another
 - ii. The fact that God has done this shows us that He is deeply, faithfully, unwaveringly committed to make us like His Son
 1. I have hope for my own growth in practical holiness and the defeat of sin within my own heart and mind
 2. I have hope for all my brethren, no matter how broken and weakened and struggling

3. Because God is faithful
 - iii. I am certain that God desires our holiness and our struggle against the sin for which Jesus was humiliated and suffered
 1. **1 John 3:1-3 (slide)**
 - d. Because God is faithful, I thank God for you
 - i. If God has said it, done it, or promised it, then it is True, Done, and Certain.

Conclusion: God's promise and faithfulness is the root of our gratitude for His beloved Bride in all her broken glory. How often do we thank God for His Church? Not for her beauty or power or presence, but for His grace to her? His commitment to love her, to unite her to His Son, to purify her for His glory, to present her on that Day blameless for the sake of His Son? How often are we seeing God's works instead of the Church's failed works? I must admit, as a gifted cynic, I am convicted by the Word of God here. In this, today I am committing to grow in gratitude to God. I want to fix my eyes on the hope which springs from His faithfulness and not our own power. Will you join me in this?

And as we gather around the Table this morning, to share in the wine and the bread, we are proclaiming the fellowship with His Son into which God has called us by His grace and faithfulness. We proclaim Him glorious and blameless and we thank God (Eucharist) for uniting us to His Son with all the blessings that this entails according to the riches of His glorious grace.