

More Loving Reminders – 1 Cor 1:4-9

1 Cor 1:4-9 (*More Loving Reminders*)

We're 4 weeks in to our Issues series on 1 Cor – titled as such b/c of all the issues he addresses in this letter

And having looked last week at 3 loving reminders from Paul re his authority, and our identity, and God's blessing in our lives . . .

We find 3 more this week – *More Loving Reminders*

Intended to help us think right about our walk . . .

And renew our focus on Jesus as the be-all-end-all of our lives

In fact, as we read v4-9, notice how often Paul appeals to him as the reason, and basis, and focus of everything he says (1 Cor 1:4-9) (**Intro**)

Do you see it? It's Jesus, Jesus, Jesus – mentioned 6 times in as many verses (cite them)

You think he's trying to tell us something? I think so

Apart from Christ – we got nothin'

Apart from him, there's nothing that sets us apart from anything else

We have what we have, b/c of Jesus; We are who we are, b/c of Jesus

We do what we do, b/c of Jesus

He's not just the reason for the season every 12 months, he's the reason for our lives all year long

o I love what Tim Tebow said in that respect, at the end of his last college football game recently

Standing before a packed stadium to receive an MVP award, he was asked some question about the game . . .

And the first words out of his mouth were something to the effect of . . .

"First of all, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He's the reason we're here."

He's the reason we're here – IOW it's all about Jesus

He's the common thread woven throughout this paragraph . . .

And he *should* be the common thread woven **throughout our lives**

With that in mind then, our first reminder, based on Paul's example, is to . . .

1. Be thankful for God's grace (v4)

I think that's one of the main things he's getting at when he says in v4 . . .

Always – meaning "as a regular habit" and "at every opportunity"

Grace – free, un-earnable, un-deserved, and un-repayable kindness and favor of God

That's the grace of God to which he's referring – grace that's given to us in Christ

And grace for which we too s/b thankful, just like Paul

Yes, he thanks God for the Corinthian believers . . .

But the *reason* he does so, is b/c of God's grace that was *given* to them

Despite their shortcomings, and despite their issues – grievous as some of them were . . .

Paul still saw evidence of God's grace in the Corinthians, and thanked him for it

And we should too

We too should give thanks to God for the grace he gives to those around us

• But here's the catch – you'll never thank God for what you don't see

And you'll never see it, if you don't *look*; You have to *look*

You have to look for evidences of God's grace in people

Do you do that? Do you see the grace of God in people?

I know some of you do – I've seen it; But it doesn't come naturally, does it?

Our natural tendency is to see people's failures, or sins, or shortcomings

Not their fruit, or their motives, or their potential

You have to *look* for it – more so in some than in others, I admit

But there nonetheless, especially for those who are in Christ

And when you find it, when you *see* it – be thankful

Be thankful for the work of grace that God has done in them – **undeserved as it is**

• **Not only that**, but be thankful for God's grace given to us *in Christ*

That is, in his person, and work, and presence

Oh how we need to be reminded of that from time to time – do we not?

To be thankful for the grace you see . . .

In his life – the fact that he came to earth in the first place, instead of ignoring us

In his death – that he suffered our punishment, instead of expecting us to

In his resurrection – that he rose to new life, so that we could too, both spiritually *and* physically some day

In his intercession – at the right hand of the Father on our behalf, everyday

It's grace upon grace, and it's been given to us in *Jesus*

Something for which we should *always* be thankful

• The problem is, we get numb to it every now/then, don't we? Tired of hearing about it

Even now, some of you are thinking – "All we ever hear about is grace"

"Grace, grace, grace, grace, grace; Didn't you just talk about that last week?"

Ya; And I'm quite sure I'll talk about it again in the weeks to come

B/c *Paul* talks about it, and it's the *centerpiece* of the gospel

If you're tired of hearing about God's grace, you don't get it, and probably don't have it

In which case you'll *never* be thankful for it

You have to *accept* it in order to "get it," and *have* it, in order to **appreciate** it

Embrace God's grace for yourself, look for it in others

And never stop being thankful it

That's the first loving reminder by way of Paul's example; The second is to . . .

2. Be mindful of God's gifts (v5-7)

Gifts that are given to us, once again, *in him*, in Christ

5 – *In every way you were enriched in him*

After thanking God for his grace in v4, Paul notes specifically what that grace looked like in v5 – namely spiritual gifts

In every way, he says, *you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge* – i.e. in their heightened ability to speak and understand God's truths . . .

In every way you were enriched in him . . . so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift (7)

God has given us abilities and talents and aptitudes, by virtue of our union with, and relationship to Christ – *you were enriched in him* . . .

So that as a church, we are not lacking in any spiritual gift to do his will

That's what it means to be enriched *in him*

Collectively, we *have* the ability to accomplish the work of ministry to which we're called
Abilities that most often exist within us *before* Christ, but are supercharged *in* Christ
Gifts that many times lie dormant or are little used *outside* the body of Christ . . .
But in it, are sorely needed and bear more fruit than ever before

- I recently met someone who was saved at the age of 17
And up to that point, had very little to do with music, except some occasional singing
But shortly after he was saved, he picked up a guitar, taught himself how to play . . .
And within 6 months was leading worship and traveling with a Christian band

His God-given gifts were there, but were *dormant* apart from Christ
In Christ however, they were supercharged, developed, and used for the glory of God
Bearing more fruit *than ever before*

- One of many examples that we are not lacking in any spiritual gift, in order to do any thing God wants
And here in v6-7, Paul reminds us of 3 things re those gifts; The first being . . .

1. We have them from the start
That's the implication of v6 – which is kind of a parenthetical thought in the middle of the sentence, to say that . . .
God gives his gifts even as the gospel is just beginning to take root in a church
Or as Paul says it – *even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you* (6)
Even as evidence of its power to change lives is just beginning to show

IOW God's gracious gifting doesn't wait until we reach a certain maturity
Or until we experience a 2nd baptism of the HS as some would advocate
They're there, from the start; We have them
And not just a little, but in abundance – that's the 2nd aspect of our spiritual giftedness he reminds us of

2. They're ours in abundance (7)
As a church, we're enriched in *every* way, not lacking in *anything* that's necessary to live for Christ, and accomplish the work to which he's called us
Just like the church in Corinth, we have what we need in abundance
And so does every other Bible-believing, Bible-preaching, Christ-exalting church

But that doesn't mean, that we have the same *amount* of spiritual giftedness as other churches . . .
Or the same maturity or development of those gifts

It simply means that as a church, we are not lacking in any spiritual gift necessary, to do the spiritual work that God expects of *us*

Some churches have 2 people adept at administration, while others have 2000
Some have 3 really good teachers, while others have 30

- The gifts God has given us as a church, we have in abundance – there's no doubt
And we need to be ever mindful of them, so as to use them to the fullest
But it doesn't mean that we're equal to the church down the block, or that we can coast just b/c we are

It simply means that each church has the abundance of gifts *it* needs, to do the things God wants
And while some churches will excel in some gifts – like speech and knowledge . . .
Other churches will excel in other gifts – like helping or teaching

The important thing is to be mindful of the abundance *we* have, and not be wishing for what *they* have
And then using it, using the abundance of our gifts, *to the fullest*

That's the 3rd part of being mindful of God's gifts . . .
We have them from the start; They're ours in abundance; And . . .

3. They're there to use
When you combine v7b – *as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ* . . .
With the abundance of gifts we're given . . .
He means to wait with anticipation *and* activity
That's the implication – anticipation *with* activity

Which means we need to be working for Christ, while we're waiting for Christ
He doesn't give us an abundance of spiritual gifts to sit on, and do nothing with
He gives them to us to use

- Like when someone special is coming to your home, do you sit around the week before, and sip tea?
Just looking at the vacuum cleaner, and admiring the dishwasher, and wondering what you could accomplish if you picked up the broom? I don't think so
For most, there's a flurry of activity to *use* those "gifts," and all the more so as the day approaches

Does your life reflect that re the day of *Christ*?
Are you mindful of God's gifts that he's given to you?
Are you using them – to their fullest? I hope you are

And if you're not sure what your gifts are, the best way to find out is to start serving
Yes, you can take spiritual gift inventories, and questionnaires, and so on . . .
But the best way to discover your spiritual gifts, is to start serving
To try different things for a time, and see if they fuel you, or deplete you

If it fuels you, chances are, you've found your giftedness
If not, keep looking; B/c there's no greater waste than to squander the *gifts of God*

Be thankful for God's grace; Be mindful of God's gifts; And . . .

3. Be assured of God's faithfulness (v8-9)

(Read v7-9); God is faithful to sustain you in your faith – he *will* do it . . .

And he'll present you guiltless when Christ returns . . .

B/c he called you in the first place, and you're a part of *the fellowship of his Son* (9) – the church; the community of believers who belong together

- Look at v8; You can be assured of God's faithfulness *to sustain you to the end*, to preserve you as one of his own . . .
Until *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* – the day he returns to receive us unto himself
The day of his appearing, in glory, with his angels – to judge the wicked, and receive the faithful
That's the day of our Lord Jesus Christ
And we can be assured that God will preserve us in our faith until then

Not only that, but we can be assured that he will present us pure in Christ's presence – *guiltless*

Facing no punishment for our sin, and free of any charge or accusation

B/c the one who meets us, has paid it all

We can be **assured of it**

- All that means, you can't lose your salvation – b/c God won't allow it
He will sustain you to the end (8)
Meaning, he will give you both the desire, and the ability, to persevere in your faith, until Christ returns
You can't lose your salvation b/c God won't allow it – he will sustain you

Not only that, but you can't lose your salvation – b/c God finishes what he starts

That's the implication of v9 – that b/c he *called* you into the fellowship of his Son, he will *keep* you in the fellowship of his Son

B/c he chose you to be saved in the first place, which doesn't alleviate your responsibility to respond by the way, or diminish your freedom to resist . . .

But b/c he chose you to be saved, he will keep you saved

That's how v9 fits in the flow of thought

It's not just a pithy little saying, tacked on to the end of the paragraph for good looks

It's the reason we can be assured of his sustaining grace until the end, to present us guiltless before his Son

God finishes what he starts; And never fails in that

Which of course is exactly what Paul says in **Phil 1:6** –

I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you [i.e. he who called you unto salvation in the first place] *will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

I like how one commentator said – “We are saved b/c God wanted us saved, and we stay saved b/c God does not change his mind about that desire.” *****

(MacArthur, 1 Cor Commentary, p22)

- You can't lose your salvation – God won't allow it; He finishes what he starts . . .
And b/c you're a part of the church – *the fellowship of his Son*
The very thing he sent his Son to establish in the first place

Do you think he's going to let it fall apart, or let you fall off the wagon, or allow you to be snatched away?

I think not

Jesus said in Jn 10:29 re his sheep, those who follow him, that – *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

Put that together with the fact that he will *sustain* you – giving you both the desire *and* the ability to persevere until the end . . .

And the fact that he is faithful to finish what he starts . . .

And you can't lose your salvation; God keeps those he calls

I'd say that's grace for which we s/b thankful, don't you? (**Summary**)

Be thankful for his grace; Be mindful of his gifts; And be assured of his

faithfulness Loving reminders to live by – literally