

Everything we are and every hope we have stems from the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Paul's Apostleship is based on the authority of Jesus Christ

1. Apostle
 - a. His authority derives from Jesus Christ.
 - i. “Apostle is one who is sent on a definite mission, in which he acts with full authority on behalf of the sender and is accountable to Him.” (Evangelical Theological Dictionary)
 - ii. It was the direct intervention of Christ that changed the trajectory of his life (Acts 9:4-6; 15)
 - iii. As Paul writes and encourages the church, we are being encouraged by Christ himself.
2. By the will of God
 - a. Paul's apostleship is not based on his own aspirations or credentials but by God's divine preparation.
 - i. Paul was not worthy to be called an apostle.
 - ii. “To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles...” (3:8)
 - b. It was God's will to use Paul for his divine purposes.
 - i. God used precisely Paul's story, his weaknesses, and his strengths to bring glory to Himself in bringing the gospel to the Gentiles.
 - ii. God's will is mysterious (v. 9), it is full of kind intention (v. 5), according to His purpose he works all things after the counsel of His will (v. 11)

[Application]

- As we hear his words can we hear them as the words of Christ?
- Will we recognize the power for transformation that comes through the person of Christ?
- Can we hear Paul's encouragement to us and realize that his hopeful words are not just a pipe dream, but they are the truth spoken from our Savior?

God's people are faithful because of their union with Christ

1. Being “in Christ” is the source of our faithfulness.
 - a. We can be faithful because he is faithful.
 - b. We can be called saints because we have his righteousness.
2. Being “in Christ” is the starting point for every Christian's identity (164 times in Paul's writings).
 - a. Christ is our: head (Col 1:18; 2:19), source of life (John 14:6), source of growth and unity (Col 2:19), light (John 8:12), fullness (Col 2:9-10), goal (Rom 10:4), wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor 1:30; Col 2:3; Eph 1:17).
 - b. James Stewart, “When a man comes to be ‘In Christ,’ he begins to live in the post-resurrection life of Christ.”
 - c. Westminster Confession of Faith: Of the Communion of Saints – All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory...

[Application]

- We no longer start with “why me”, or “how could God do this to me, to us” but rather our starting point is – I am in Christ. I am united to Him.
- He is for us. He loves us. We have his inheritance, his riches, his righteousness, and therefore we have access to God the father through Him. We are not orphans; we are sons and daughters with the privileges of being called His people.

Hope flows from the blessings of Christ

1. The traditional Greek greeting was “rejoice”, the traditional Hebrew greeting was “shalom – peace”; here Paul changes rejoice to “Grace” and the Greek word for peace.
 - a. Grace: god's spontaneous, unmerited favor in action towards his people. Grace is the fountain.
 - b. Peace belongs to the stream of spiritual blessings which comes from the fountain of grace.
 - i. *Eirene* (peace) – set of favorable circumstances involving peace and tranquility
 - c. This idea bookends the letter – (1:2; 6:23, 24)
 - i. Peace be to the brothers, grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ
2. Out of the grace comes the *shalom* (wholeness, flourishing) that only life in Christ can bring.

[Application]

- In the midst of difficulty, in the midst of whatever situation we find ourselves in, we can have hope because of the grace and peace that we have in Christ.