1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verse 4

* What an ***interesting/crazy*** statement! Paul will spend 11 chapters correcting them, sharply in some places! And yet he says here, ***before all of that***, that he’s thankful for God’s grace on them. That’s remarkable! This is a church that (if you will) has ***turned on*** Paul…who founded that church…set it in motion and then almost immediately there is fornication, people taking people to court, people getting drunk during communion, there is great division…***this is humiliating for Paul!*** When someone humiliates you, it takes something more than *human strength and will* to say, *“I thank God for you everyday!”* ***That is a work of the Spirit and this is eternal perspective!***
* Is that you? Listen, I want you to know this too….***before you can righteously correct someone this ought to be your heart!*** *Man, I am thankful that God has given you His grace. Not because you need it, (because I’m thinking in Paul’s situation to the Corinthians, “YOU above anyone else are getting in on grace”) but because you’ve received it!*

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verses 5 – 7

* That word ***enriched*** is truly rich! It means that you have been ***plurafied!*** The word in the Greek is *ploutizo* and its where we get our word, *“plutocrat.”* Now you probably don’t know what that means but that is a person who has power but that power is derived from their wealth. You may not know this either but plutocracy is alive and well in our world today. 8 Men control over half of all the wealth in the entire world! Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Michael Bloomberg…who elected them? Who voted for them? **No one!** But they have astronomical power in our world. Well, that is plutocracy!
* Well check this out, Paul says you have *position, a place, authority, purpose and you’re plurified*, why? Because you’re a good person and have scratched your way to the top? Not at all…, *“You were enriched in everything* ***by Him!”*** All that we have, inheritance, salvation, right standing with God, a name in all of eternity, we have because (and only because) of Jesus! I love this, ***Jesus stood in my place on the cross so that I can stand in His place in heaven!***
* The Corinthian church, Paul says here, flourished with knowledge and utterance and came short in no gift or in other words, they were very charismatic/demonstrative…and yet as we will find out, ***were extremely carnal.*** We have this fallacy to think highly of someone who seems to have giftings, manifestations of the Spirit. That if they speak in tongues or prophecy in the wisdom of the angelic realm that they are someone more spiritual. Remember Corinth! Remember Peter who after healing the blind man outside the temple said to the people who wanted his autograph, (Acts 3:12) *“Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”*
* Spurgeon said, “*It is nothing to have the gift of oratory; that it is nothing to have the power of eloquence; that it is nothing to have learning; that it is nothing to have influence, unless they all be dedicated to God, and consecrated to his service?”*
* Folks want to lead worship because they sing. They want to lead Bible studies and ministries because they can speak or they know the scriptures or they have ***this*** experience or ***that*** experience. ***It makes no difference your talent, where is your heart? How grown are you there?*** The Corinthians church had all of the gifts and yet the heart of the church was off track, off base, and because of it the church suffered, Paul suffered, and the Holy Spirit was grieved.
* If you have talent then that is wonderful. Use it to the glory of God. **But I’m not so sure that God is looking for talent.** Talent comes from Him, He knows you have these abilities, He wrote them into your code. **And yet**, it takes no talent to be *diligent and trustworthy*. It takes no talent *to be kind* and serve others around you. It takes no talent to **police** your attitude and **ensure** your humility towards God and others. It takes no talent to go the extra mile. It takes no talent to be present and it takes no talent to be prepared. ***It takes no talent at all to worship God in Spirit and in truth.*** Martha knew how to administrate her home and make a wonderful meal…but Mary chose the better place.
* The gifts of the Spirit are good and they are for today. The manifestations of God are to be sought after and desired…but Paul will say later that his desire is to show them, and us, **a more excellent way**…to be focused on what God is focused on…not the outward appearance, but the heart of a person…***to simply love God and love others***…and then the talents and the gifts and the manifestations and the ministries…**Now they’ll bless others, they’ll bless God…and not just you.**
* One more small thing I want to point out here. Paul says back in verse 5, *“That you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you.”* Why was it all a **wreck** then? Because ***the order was all wrong.*** In your life, in mine, man in those that would lead in the Kingdom of God on this earth, we must seek the reverse order! The testimony of Christ confirmed in us! ***That God SO LOVED the world that He came not to condemn but that the world through Him may be saved!*** Then grow in knowledge! And how do you grow in knowledge, knowledge that won’t puff up but will secure a right heart and a clean spirit. Hint: It’s not learn the Word of God. ***Surrender*** to the Word of God! THEN, utterance….then you’re ready, prepared, thoroughly equipped for every good work!

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verses 8 – 9

* This is so good and so **absolutely critical!** To know this, to understand this…Paul is thankful *for them*, for God’s *grace on them*, for their *enthusiasm and knowledge*…and he knows for himself and for them (and I pray for you as well), that the underlying reason and foundation that is **laid under any faith worth even talking** about is this statement here…***that on that day when we are face to face with our Creator, we will be judged blameless!***
* George Washington led a nation to freedom. Abraham Lincoln laid out equality for all people. Martin Luther, John Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, John Paul Jones, Joan of Arc, General George Patton, Moses, Joshua, Isaac Newton, Martin Luther King Jr., Anne Frank, Frederick Douglas, all heroes of history…but even all that they did, is it more than turning a person to Jesus?
* This word *blameless* is a legal term! It literally means, ***presented in a court of justice and truth, you and I are not only judged “not guilty,” but they can’t even find the charges!!*** You’re unaccusable, unreproveable! Why? Because by the price paid on your behalf by Jesus, **all charges were dropped** long ago…
* But the Corinthian church has so many problems! They are so entirely a mess…how can this be? Verse 9…because ***it’s God that isn’t a mess***…God is **faithful** and He is the one that has called us into fellowship with His Son and He is the one that will confirm us to the very end. ***He will do it all…***
* AND folks wonder today, ***what is my calling…what is my job***…listen man, **your calling is not your job or position!** HA! God isn’t sitting up in heaven with an open req for pastor and, *“Whew, thank ME that Matt applied! Now I can rest!”* **Not at all.** Your calling, my calling is much more important than any job or position…***we are called into fellowship (all things in common) with Jesus.*** Then, I get to pastor and teach and what a privilege and joy it is!!
* Have you ever had one of your small children help you with a job? Is it really ***any*** help at all!? NO way! But you let them help because it blesses them…not because it necessarily blesses you! I think that is how God is with me…I stand up here being ***ridiculously entertaining*** teaching the Bible and He has to come behind me and clean up where I don’t see and know and that is GREAT! ***He is more interested in me then how I serve Him!***

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 Verses 10 – 13a

* Paul is not beating around the bush. He simply and objectively goes right into the issue and I like that about Paul. Beating around the bush is a term first used in the 1570s (*perhaps Chin started it*) and it literally means ***to waste time.*** Not my bag at all. He pleads with them…literally in the Greek he calls them out of weakness (**weakedness** – new word)…and says to them there will be no peace without grace.
* Truly ***grace is the main ingredient in unity.*** It is ultra important for the church, and for a church specifically, **to not be divided.** ***Unity is the peace that encourages our hearts.*** We think peace is a mutual decision not to destroy each other…it’s not. That’s an armistice. Peace that brings encouragement and *constructive coalesced capacity*…increases efficacy and effectiveness is truly **unity** and it is vital in a church that is truly going to reflect Jesus Christ. Why? ***Because He is the Great Unifier!***
* What did He do on the cross but bring man back into communion with his Creator! Reunited and it feels so GOOD!! Romans 6:5 says we are *“united with Him in the resurrection!”* Ephesians 2:14 says, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier!”* Please know this…you will not know the progress and advancement and delivering that you desire in your ministry, in your marriage, in your career, in your walk with God unless there exists in ***that relational wrap a strong unity!***
* Now, easy to preach…here’s the hard part. ***Unity requires grace, submission to order and authority and it requires the participants to walk in the Spirit.***  Without the Spirit bearing the fruit, unity is untouchable! But where unity is…there is peace and just imagine if the nations of this world…not armistice, but peace…what could we accomplish?!
* Paul says*, you’re saved, you’re on your way to heaven*…but many you are crawling when you ought to be running! You’re missing out and folks are being hurt. That’s what the word *division* in the Greek used here means…it is the word *schisma*…and it literally means a *“tearing apart.”* When there is no unity…because of pride or no grace or no submission or whatever…under the surface that is truly what’s happening. ***Folks are being torn apart***, possibility of depth of and strength of relationship is being torn apart.
* Now, in a church that is **famous** for *fornication and public embarrassment and drunkenness and lewdness* why on earth would he start with addressing **division!?** Why is this the top of Paul’s list? Because it is the top of God’s list. Satan knows well…if he can divide us and we are tearing ourselves down, ***if there is division then the correction of adultery doesn’t stand a chance.*** If the people are ripping each other apart and divided, then the folks standing drunk at the communion table do not stand a chance. The first thing that needs to happen is that these Corinthians need to realize that division is **greatly hated** by God. Proverbs 6, *“These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him...one who sows discord among brethren.”*
* I struggle with this just like you. It’s very easy for me to put on a smile and greet folks that have evil in their hearts towards me…but I and you need to get on our knees and ask the Lord to give us a heart of forgiveness…**God’s asking for a work of His Spirit in our lives.** *Lord I don’t deserve your forgiveness, they are no worse than me, You’ve saved me and allowed me, how can I ever complain about someone else…*
* Satan has always known and his **always play** has been division…steal, kill and destroy…three things, **not two.** Kill and destroy are two different things…***and division is his strength.*** To divide you from the fellowship of God which is exactly what happened all the way at the beginning of man…but Jesus has come that you might know unity again. Communion again. First with the Father but also with each other. ***Would we pray to walk in that this week.***