

The Lamb of God is all you need – 1

Corinthians 1:1-9

Pastor Colin Rieke – January 15, 2017

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ² 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: ³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— ⁶ because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

I remember the first time I went to Las Vegas. It was the last stop on a choir tour during my first year at the Seminary. After singing at one of our WELS churches in Las Vegas, we had the opportunity to drive down the strip. I say “drive down” because that night I came down sick and wouldn’t have been able to walk any part of the strip. The lights and the glamor of the strip in Las Vegas has always had a certain appeal to me, call it a “moth to a lightbulb” type of appeal. While I would like to consider my attraction to the lights of Las Vegas an innocent sort, I do know there’s plenty of not-so-innocent parts of Las Vegas too (and yes, I know there’s more to Las Vegas than the strip). There are plenty of these not-so-innocent parts that attract plenty of other people to Las Vegas. And it’s all covered with the famous phrase, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.”

Whether you like Las Vegas or not, you do know the general reputation that Las Vegas has. I wonder if that is the same way that ancient Greeks and those living around Greece had about the city of Corinth? The city of Corinth was a bustling hub of commerce and activity. Situated on a narrow strip of land, it was the perfect location for both land trade and sea trade. It was a cosmopolitan center attracting people from all over. On one of the nearby hills stood the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and you can imagine what attracted worshipers there. The city of Corinth was known for its loose living, and to be called a “Corinthian” was not a compliment. And so in some ways, Corinth had a similar reputation to that of Las Vegas today.

Yet, despite this reputation, the apostle Paul went to Corinth. The apostle Paul ministered to people in Corinth. The apostle Paul taught to the people in Corinth. And through the apostle Paul, God grew a Christian church in Corinth. Now I’d love to tell you that out of this pit of licentiousness grew this beautiful rose of a congregation, but from what we gather in the letters Paul wrote to the Corinthians, this church was not without fault. This congregation did not get everything right. This congregation had

more than its fair share of problems. From one person's perspective, this congregation was Paul's "beloved, brilliant and wayward child."

This is what made the Apostle Paul's work among the Corinthians all that much more important. And there's something to be learned from how the apostle Paul addressed this beloved, brilliant and wayward child of a church. Because it didn't matter what issues that congregation was dealing with then, it doesn't matter what issues this congregation is dealing with today, the problem is still the same, and the solution is still the same. The problem is always selfish division, while the solution is selfless unity. Unity for the church that is only found in the Lamb of God. For THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED.

1. He calls you
2. He enriches you
3. He preserves you

(1)

In our gospel for this morning, we heard how John the Baptist, prepared the way for Christ, and pointed him out when he got there. And do you remember what he said? **"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."** It is this simple message that so many had been waiting for, it's this simple message that the apostle Paul took with him on his missionary journeys, and it's so simple that THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED.

But like people are apt to do, these Corinthians, by their actions, forgot that THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED. By this time, the apostle Paul had already left Corinth for the next city on his missionary journey. But he had received a letter from a member in the Corinthian congregation updating him on the status of his beloved, brilliant, and wayward child. It's a letter that has not survived to today, but it's a letter that prompted the writing of the book we call 1 Corinthians. And right here at the beginning of this letter, the apostle Paul wastes no time in reminding the Corinthians that THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED. He does this in verse 4, **"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."**

"The grace given you in Christ Jesus." 'How is that enough?' the Corinthians wondered. These were the people who had misunderstood the grace given in Christ, by coupling that with their own "wisdom." These were the people who miscalculated the freedom the gospel gave, by using it as a license to live in whatever way they wanted without consequences. These are the people who misused the gifts of the gospel, by making everything point back to them, instead of Christ. These are the people who misconstrued the hope of the gospel, by saying the idea of a resurrection helps us be better people. The Corinthians abused the gospel in just about every way possible, they had rejected the idea that THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED, and yet Paul says, **"I thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."**

How often do we need to be reminded of this as well? Because how often have we forgotten that THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL WE NEED? Instead our instinct, our sinful nature tells us we need more, because it cannot believe that God would give us something for nothing. We convince ourselves that we need to do something with this grace of God to be worthy of it. We convince ourselves that we need to be faithful to God by coming to church, by reading his Word, by living a life worthy of him. Then we can fall

into one of two traps – either we think we have done enough to deserve him, or more accurately, we recognize all of the times when we haven’t lived like a Christian. We remember those times when our good intentions did not mesh with reality. We remember those times when we outright defied God. We remember those times when we chose to be selfish with our time, talents, and treasures, instead of thanking the God who gave them to us.

But if the apostle Paul were around today, I believe he would say the same thing to you as he did to those Corinthians Christians. In fact he does. He didn’t just address his letter to the Corinthians but also, **“to those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.”** Because now, like then, it is never about our faithfulness to God, it is about his faithfulness to us. Even though the Corinthians struggled with many problems and sins (that he will later go on to discuss), he reminded them of who they were. This is how he describes them, **“to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy.”** This was not some cheap platitude to butter them up, this was not some hollow compliment, this was not even an encouragement for the Corinthians to act better. This was a reminder of who the Corinthians were, not because of something in them, but because of THE LAMB OF GOD, WHICH IS ALL THEY NEEDED. This LAMB OF GOD called them to be holy. And the same way the LAMB OF GOD called them to be holy, he calls us to be holy. Paul is not saying anything more than Jesus, when he said, **“you did not choose me, but I chose you.”** Paul said the same thing in his letter to the Ephesians, **“God chose you before the creation of the world.”**

How different this was from everything else the Corinthians knew. They could choose to go to the temple of Aphrodite and worship her, they could choose to go down to the local pub to fraternize with their buddies, but they couldn’t choose the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God chose them.

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And it wasn’t just that the Lamb of God chose them, he also enriched their lives. The city of Corinth was a center of commerce. The city of Corinth was all about making wealth. The city of Corinth was all about doing things to enrich lives – physically, emotionally, spiritually. The only problem was, all of these other things they tried – acquiring more stuff, “worshiping” more at the temple of Aphrodite, filling their hearts and minds with good thoughts and accolades – none of them worked, and neither do they work today.

Oh, some of these distractions may satisfy a certain itch, but like those commercials for drugs on TV, they cause a whole lot of other problems. But the gospel – the grace of God in Christ Jesus – is all you need. Because he enriched them. Paul says, **“For in him you have been enriched in every way.”** He enriched them in ways that all of those other worldly pleasures and goods didn’t and couldn’t. THE LAMB OF GOD GIVING YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED is incredibly comforting. Because it means you don’t have to chase after the latest and greatest stuff, you don’t have to chase after the more money, you don’t have to chase after pleasure and good feelings elsewhere, because Christ has already taken care of it. He is the one we lay our sins upon before God.

When you don’t have to worry about how much stuff you have, when you don’t have to worry about where your next high is going to come from, when you don’t have to worry about this stuff to satisfy you, then you can take the opportunity to look at the glass half full instead of half empty. Instead of complaining about what you didn’t get, be thankful and happy for what you did get. Instead of rushing

off in the morning grind to work, look at the beauty of the creation around you. Instead of feeling the need to put money in the offering plate, feel the desire to do so. What was true for the Corinthians, is true for you too. THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED, because the LAMB OF GOD has enriched you in every way.

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So let's review. THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL WE NEED because he chose us, he's all we need because he enriches us. These two alone would be reason enough to follow the Lamb of God. But that is not all the Lamb of God does. The LAMB OF GOD IS ALL WE NEED because he preserves us too. **"He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

Paul knew the problems that existed in this congregation. Paul knew the temptations that the city of Corinth put on the church there. But Paul also knew about the faithful God, he knew about THE LAMB OF GOD who preserves his people. There may have been those in Corinth who were wondering if their church was going to survive with all the divisions. There may have been those in Corinth who were wondering if their faith was going to survive, or if the world would snuff it out, like it had snuffed out the faith of others. But right here, Paul says that **"God is faithful."** God will keep you strong to the end.

The Corinthians faith didn't rest upon them and how strong *they* could be, the Corinthians faith rested upon God and how strong *he* could be. The same God who was faithful to the Corinthians, who kept them strong to the end, is the same God who is faithful to you and will keep you strong to the end. This is why THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL YOU NEED. This is why THE LAMB OF GOD IS ALL ANYONE NEEDS. We don't worship him because he tells us to, we worship him because we want to. Paul had great confidence in the Christian church in Corinth – even though they struggled. Paul's confidence came from knowing that the burden of their sins had been picked up and carried by the LAMB OF GOD, WHO IS EVERYTHING WE NEED. Amen.