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A1138 – September 18, 2011 – 1 Corinthians 1:4-9
Enriched With Spiritual Gifts

Alright, Paul in 1 Corinthians has started with a Greeting that is both typical and atypical in certain respects. The typical portions we have attributed to the ancient Greek structure and thereby concluded that it is not necessary to go counterculture just for the sake of being counterculture. If there is something in the culture that is an acceptable expression of Biblical culture then by all means use it. However, the atypical portions of the Greeting we have attributed to the fact that there was something that was distinctively Christian and therefore Paul went counterculture, breaking from the ancient Greek structure.

The first issue that is atypical is the Doctrine of Apostleship. Paul was an apostle. And he defends it to the Galatians but not to the Thessalonians; he defends it to the Corinthians but not to the Philippians; the point being that sometimes he mentions it, sometimes he doesn't, it depends on how well his apostleship was received. We took a closer look at how Paul expressed it in verse 1, "Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." That is, Paul's basic argument is that it was God's will that I be an apostle and it was Jesus Christ personally who chose me as an apostle on the Damascus Road and commissioned me. Now, this means Paul comes in all the authority of Jesus Christ. It's Jesus Christ's message transmitted through Paul. All Paul was was a messenger. But because he was a Johnny-come-lately messenger, in Acts 9, he has to defend his apostleship to certain churches and one of those churches was at Corinth. In fact he's going to have to defend it in the first letter to the Corinthians and the second letter to the Corinthians because these people would not straighten up and get in line with the word of God the first time around.

The second atypical portion of the Greeting is the Doctrine of Sanctification. There is such a thing as positional sanctification and Paul sums it up very nicely in verse 2 by saying, “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling.” They had been set apart in Christ Jesus by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone. Therefore they were no longer in Adam but were in Christ. They had a new identity and the logic that Paul will develop in the epistle is that since you have a new identity you should live a new lifestyle; since you are in Christ you should live Christ-like. And to not do so is to not really live as you are. So the carnal Corinthians had been sanctified positionally even though their sanctification experientially was blah. But nevertheless, a vital truth to recognize for spiritual victory is the truth that you are sanctified positionally, you are in Christ. You cannot have victory over sin without reckoning that truth to be so.

The third atypical portion of the Greeting is the Doctrine of the Church. And I said there is the local church and there is the universal church. I may have been a little off here, I’m not sure. What I am sure about is that “church” in some contexts refers to the local church as a mixture of believers and unbelievers and in others it refers to the universal church which is believers only. Here it’s probably referring to a local church but he narrows it to refer to the believers only when he says, “to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling,” and then he links them with every other believer in the universal church. “with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” So Paul is tying the believers at Corinth in with every other believer at every other locality because the believers at Corinth were setting their own tone for worship services, how they carried them out and it was out of sync with every other local church. And Paul is going to argue later that you can’t do that because you at Corinth are not the universal church, you are one local branch of the universal church and you are therefore tied in with every other local church in one great big body of Christ. And since the body of Christ has only one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, then it follows that the pattern of worship in each local church should follow the same basic pattern. And so Paul is going to try to bring their pattern of worship in line with the rest of the local churches.

Today we’re going to go into 1 Cor 1:4-9. This is somewhat a continuation of the Greeting, it’s an extended Greeting and we have another unique element,

a fourth seed that will be developed in 1 Cor 1-4 and 12-14 is spiritual gifts, how these gifts are from God out of His grace and that they are far superior to mere human abilities and techniques. He says in verse 4, **I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.** The topic is spiritual gifts and Paul is thanking God for making this church spiritually wealthy in that department. The church at Corinth had every spiritual gift, which implies that not every local church had every spiritual gift, but this church did and that was probably part of their problem in thinking that they were the universal church. If they only had two gifts they might not have made that error but God had given them every spiritual gift, so they had tongues, they had prophets, they had teachers, they had givers, they had servants, they had faith people, in short, they had every spiritual gift you can list in the NT. And yet there were two misunderstandings; one, the purpose of the gifts. Are they for personal enjoyment and prestige? Are they for selfish use? Or are they for others, for mutual edification? What are spiritual gifts for? Those questions are handled in 1 Cor 12-14. A second misunderstanding was the value of God's gifts over and against the natural abilities of men of the world. Were God's gifts such that they needed the appendage of human wisdom to make them efficacious? Were God's means in need of the adumbration of worldly methods to win people to Christ? Apparently this was being done and so in 1 Cor 1-4 Paul sets himself and his message against the world, against the methods of the world, against the techniques used by the world which were being used by some of the Corinthians. And so, for example, 1 Cor 1:18, "For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written, I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Notice the contrast between how the gospel is supposed to be preached versus the clever techniques of the world. The question is does the gospel need to be dressed up in order to be effective? Does it need a little extra boost from the world to work? Unbelief perceives the cross and how belief perceives it? Notice again in 2:1 he says, "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God." I didn't use a clever technique. I just preached the word.

The historical situation (*sitz in lieben*) at Corinth was that a clever speech technique had gained popularity and some were trying to take that technique and use it as a medium for the gospel. Paul says, I didn't use a clever technique, clever techniques drain the gospel of its power. Verse 2, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." I started with Christ, I didn't start with human wisdom, human rationalism, human techniques, I started with Christ. Verse 3, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." So a major issue in chapters 1-4 is the use of the world's methods and techniques to market the gospel. Is that valid? And Paul is addressing a very modern issue. Are we going to win people to Christ by entertaining people? Are we going to win people to the gospel by putting on a big show? Are we going to win people to Christ by having age segregated programs that cater to certain felt needs? Is that what wins people to Christ? Or is it preaching that horrible thing called the crucifixion of Christ. Paul's argument is that by dressing it up with all the world's techniques destroys the power of the gospel and makes people's faith rest on the wisdom of men, my technique, and that is a very fallible foundation.

Now Paul is going to introduce this problem in a way that the 21st century person wouldn't detect without careful study. In verse 5 there are two words used that were buzz words in Corinth, the word **speech** and the word **knowledge**. Those words are used in the two Corinthian letters more than rest of the entire NT. They had a peculiar connotation at Corinth. **speech**, which is the Greek word *logos* and **knowledge**, the Greek word *gnosis*. So if you went around town, say you were a visitor and you were just vacationing in Corinth, I won't ask why you're vacationing in Corinth because it was the center of fornication, but if you were you'd walk into the market where everybody flocked, after three or four days you'd say, what is everybody's infatuation with *logos* and *gnosis*? Well the infatuation was due to a group called the *sophists*. A sophist was an orator, often an itinerant orator, he was well-trained in rhetoric. He would perform before audiences hoping to win their approval and gain certain benefits, like citizenship in the city, fame, statues in honor of, etc...By the 2nd half of the 1st century, the very time Paul visited and wrote this letter to the Corinthians, this vocation was almost

unintelligibly popular, especially in Corinth. We have records of these sophists in Corinth. And it was immensely popular.

So understand when Paul says **speech** and **knowledge**, logos and gnosis, he's referring in the background to the sophists and he's contrasting the way he came with the way the sophists came, he's contrasting the speech and knowledge of God with the speech and knowledge of the sophists, that's really what's going on. And he's trying to say to the Corinthian believers that the speech and knowledge of God is far superior to the speech and knowledge of the sophists. The sophists use a method, a technique to win over their audience, and it's not only unnecessary to use their method to preach the gospel, it's contrary to the power of God in salvation.

So that's what's coming in future weeks. But here Paul is thanking God that the Corinthians had been graced with such gifts in the department of speech and knowledge that are so far superior to sophist speech and knowledge. Now it's actually quite remarkable that he gives thanks for anything because this church was extremely irritating to Paul. Almost as irritating as the church at Galatia, and to the Galatians he had no thanksgiving at all, not even a hint of thanksgiving, zero, zilch. And at Corinth we have an almost as irritating situation and Paul graciously gives thanks to God for something at Corinth, not so much for the Corinthians but for the fact that they were rich in speech and knowledge. But by the time of 2 Corinthians he's going to be so irritated that he won't have anything to give thanks for in that letter.

So let's look at it and we'll have to polish up some of the grammar so bear with me. Verse 4, **I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus.** Now we have a translation error here you'll want to correct. The word **for**, should not be translated **for**. **For** makes it sound like Paul is giving thanks to God **for** the grace of God which was given to the Corinthians. While that sounds wonderful that is not what he is thanking God for. That is not the content of the thanksgiving; that is the basis of the thanksgiving. So it should be translated **I thank my God always concerning you comma, that on the basis of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus,** and verse 5 is what he's thanking God for, namely, **5that in everything you were enriched in Christ...** So the basis of the thanksgiving is verse 4, God's grace and the content of the

thanksgiving is verse 5, a wealth of spiritual gifts, namely speech and knowledge.

Now what Paul is trying to communicate, and why I've taken the time to point out the proper grammar, is because it was vital to the Corinthians. They had spiritual abilities that were far superior to the mere human abilities of the sophists. And he's saying these spiritual abilities come from God. They do not come from men. You are not trained in these techniques, they are given to you by God.

They had the impression that you had to go to the sophist rhetoric school to get these tools. And Paul is saying, no, God gave you these tools. They are gifts of God. That's why he says in verse 4, they have been given to you, aorist passive, these are gifts, not things you earned through study, aorist tense, given at the moment of faith in Christ and passive voice because it was a gift. And gifts you can't earn. Gifts are spiritual abilities that come from God's grace not results of training in humanistic rhetoric schools. To understand how serious the difference is I quote, "The sophists training in the first century A.D. was considered essential preparation for a young man...From the schools of the sophist's came senators, forensic rhetors and councilors, as well as officials of the imperial government...they judged that this form of education was most useful in producing leaders accomplished in the great art of persuasion." Paul says, no, you have been given everything you need in Christ. Notice that the gifts are given to us because of our connection with Christ Jesus, they are given **in Christ**. This is explained by some hairy exegesis in Eph 4 which is a spiritual gifts passage, but the bottom line of Eph 4 is that the spiritual gifts are viewed as war booty captured by the Lord Jesus Christ at His victory on the cross and then distributed sovereignly by His will to the church so as to enable believers to wage war with them in the heavenly places. So spiritual gifts fall in a very detailed plan of history that God is working out through the Church. But in verse 4 it's important to recognize that the **speech** and **knowledge** gifts are given because of our connection with Christ and not because we went and got sophist training.

Now as we said before, Paul pulls out **speech and knowledge** because the Corinthians valued these very highly, they were the terms of the sophists and it was popular in the culture, these were like buzz words for the latest greatest thing. And Paul is playing on that because the Corinthians have an

exalted view of sophistic speech and knowledge and Paul is deprecating sophistic speech and knowledge to God's gifts of speech and knowledge.

So for example, for them the value of **speech** was determined by the rhetorical ability of the speaker, his performance before a crowd; they took that valuation from the pagan culture of Corinth and embraced it. Corinth had a lot of public debates and the person who won the debate in their mind was the person who performed the best, was the most eloquent. It didn't matter if his arguments made any sense, it was just how eloquent is this person. And we have a similar kind of thing in our day. I've listened to lots of debates. I'll never forget one of them where Hank Hanegraff, supposedly the Bible Answer Man, was debating Mark Hitchcock on the dating of the book of Revelation, prior or after AD70. And get this, the debate topic was the date of the Book of Revelation, but when Hanegraff made his opening argument he started with a long eloquent recital of Revelation 1, which took about 5 minutes. It was very impressive, but it didn't have a thing to do with the debate. It was just one big impressive, hey look at me, I memorized a chapter of Scripture. Well, that's just fine and dandy, but that's not the debate. And that was the same kind of thing the Corinthians valued; how impressive you were, how slick you could speak. And so their system of values, what value they placed on certain kind of speech and knowledge was shaped not by the word of God but by pagan culture, by the sophists. Paul is interested in them adopting a biblical system of values and in the biblical valuation the best speaker is not he who puts on the best speaking performance but he who speaks the truth; content is the real issue, not performance. And yet we have the same thing happening today in the church. And Paul predicted it in 2 Timothy 4: men will no longer endure sound doctrine but will want their ears tickled. They'll want performance, not content. And we live in an age, really a post-anti-intellectual age where performance is all that matters. So we can identify. But Paul still gives thanks to God that they were so rich in the speaking gifts.

Then the second one is **knowledge** and this means "intellectual grasp of things, comprehension of ideas." Again, nothing is wrong with this, it's a kind of spiritual gift. But they had a pagan system of values that imputed to knowledge a certain value. They prided themselves in human rationalism. Most of the Corinthians were Greek in their thinking and the Greeks are known for human rationalism. To the Greeks the human mind was so great it

was able to project absolute values. They projected an ideal world, a world of perfection that embodied every possibility in the real world. It was a projection of the human mind and it was the source of absolutes. And so knowledge to the Corinthians was still viewed as sourced in the human mind; the mind of man was ultimate. Now the Bible has a valuation of knowledge too, but the value of human knowledge and the mind is that the supreme mind is not our mind but God's mind. His mind is the greatest and His thoughts are the greatest. And therefore the greatest thoughts my mind can think are God's thoughts. Thinking God's thoughts after Him is at the center of worshipping God. He is the original thinker and when I am following His train of thought I am discovering true original thought. But the mind as autonomous as the Corinthians envisioned? Exalting the human mind to the status of ultimate projector of rationality, that friend is the height of arrogance. And that's why Paul is going to rain down on them for their use of knowledge. So understand that nothing is wrong with the mind and thinking, what is wrong is making the mind of man absolute. That my friend is the height of arrogance. What is right in the sight of God is placing our mind under His absolute mind. That my friend is the height of humility.

But Paul is here giving thanks that God had enriched them with **speech** and **knowledge** because they are far superior to the techniques of the sophists. Verse 6, **even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in** or rather "among" **you**. That is, the gifts they had received, certain miraculous gifts validated the gospel message. In the first century of the church certain outstanding gifts were given that corroborated the message. Now these outstanding gifts no longer are needed to corroborate the message, it's already been corroborated. And therefore we are entering on the doctrine of cessationism vs non-cessationism. Let me explain these two terms. Cessationism is the doctrine that some of the spiritual gifts ceased in the 1st century. Non-cessationism is the doctrine that every spiritual gift is operational in every century. The orthodox view that has been held by the vast majority of biblical theologians through all of church history is cessationism. Only here and there do we find people in church history who claimed non-cessationism, and they're based on little spurts of activity that people claimed were Spirit outpourings. And the recent spurt began in 1901, now called the Toronto Phenomenon, where people rolled around barking like dogs and rolling down the aisle. And this is attributed to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the latter rain predicted in Joel 2 and so we have to deal with it.

Because while we fully affirm that all the gifts were operational in the 1st century there is no evidence that they have been operational in every century since.

So turn to Heb 2:3-4. One of the questions people ask is, well, if the gifts have ceased in the 1st century then why doesn't the NT clearly say they ceased? Well, the simple answer to that is that all the NT writings were written in the 1st century when they were operational. So obviously they're not going to say they ceased. However, Hebrews was written late in the NT period, AD67 and by this time the nation of Israel had been witnessed to, witnessed to, witnessed to and witnessed to until they were almost at the time of judgment, AD70. And here in the book of Hebrews, whoever wrote it, the epistle of Hebrews is addressed to the second generation group of Jews. If a Jew was say 30 years old in 30 AD then how old would he be now? He'd be almost 70 and so by that time there would be newer, younger people that had become Christians. So the epistle to the Hebrews was written for that second generation of Jewish believers. And notice what the author of Hebrews says in vv 3-4 to that second generation of Jewish believers, "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, *it was confirmed* to us by those *who heard*, ⁴God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." The main verb is there in verse 3, "it was confirmed" and that's an aorist tense, that's a past completed action, it's not being confirmed, "it was confirmed." And notice that the author of Hebrews is including himself as one from the second generation of Jewish believers that did not witness this directly, he was not a first generation Jewish believer, so that alone proves to you Paul did not write Hebrews. It's simply impossible from these verses because Paul was a first generation believer, he did do signs and miracles, whoever wrote this did not. He had to have first generation believer's come along and confirm it to him. He deliberately excludes himself because he did not hear but those who did hear confirmed it to him and other second generation believers. Continuing v 4, "God also testifying with them," that first generation, "both by signs and wonders and by various miracles..." The point is that by the second generation those signs and gifts had already begun to fade out and the second generation of Jewish believers, including the author of Hebrews did not see them, they did not witness them but they were confirmed to have taken place by those from the first generation. The year here is 67AD, so he's looking

back and he's saying that was the glorious age when signs and miracles were happening but that's already happened. It's no longer happening.

Here's a quote to the effect that in the period from 30AD~70AD there was a decrescendo of miracles. W.H. Griffith Thomas says, "...in regard to the [miraculous] gifts. They are seen to be in operation up to the end of Acts, but not afterwards, for while, for example, the gift of healing is found throughout Acts," and Acts takes you to 62AD, so up till then we have all kinds of references to miraculous things, but then he says, "we have no trace of anything of the kind afterwards; on the contrary, Epaphroditus is spoken of as dangerously ill, Timothy is given medical advice, and Trophimus is left at Miletus sick. The same contrast is seen if we take the Epistles of St. Paul written before Acts xxviii. 9. I and 2 Thess.; I and 2 Cor.; Gal.; Rom.), and compare them with those written during the Roman captivity...twenty-two references to tongues, and none in the latter; nine allusions to [miraculous] gifts as opposed to two; thirteen references to prophecy as a gift, with none in the latter. These facts, and more that could be adduced, seem to show that the miraculous gifts recorded in Acts were...not intended for permanent exercise in the normal conditions of the Christian Church when Christ had been rejected by Israel. When these remarkable differences between Acts and St. Paul are thus viewed historically and dispensationally, they are seen to be explicable on these grounds...When once it is realized that the Pentecostal period was transitional, and was more closely connected with the Jewish past than with the universal Christian future, everything becomes quite clear.."ⁱ And Paul is saying that testimony confirmed the gospel, it validated it, it was evidence to corroborate the gospel. Does it have to be validated today? Do we have to see miracles to confirm the gospel for us? No, as Heb 2:3-4 says the truth has already been confirmed in history and saying it has to be re-confirmed every generation is like saying God has to turn water into wine for every generation. That's not the way God works. Once it has been confirmed in history it stands as the truth for all time. Now that the truth has been confirmed the issue is to believe it. And the testimony of Christ had been corroborated by every spiritual gift being operational in Corinth. All kinds of gifts, verse 7, notice, **so that you are not lacking in any gift**, they were a rich church in the spiritual gifts department. Then he says, **awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**, and the word **awaiting eagerly** means to wait expectantly, like something is about to happen. And what is about to happen? **The revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**. That's

His coming for us from heaven to take us to heaven. So this is the rapture, and for all we can tell here it's the very next event on the prophetic calendar. If it was about to happen in their day then it certainly is about to happen in ours. It can happen at any moment and that's the doctrine of imminency, and it simply means that nothing has to happen before Christ returns for us. To put it another way, let's say you know X is going to happen, X being the rapture, then W doesn't have to happen before X can happen. Because if W had to happen before then W is a sign that X is about to happen. So in that scenario I'm looking for signs, I'm a sign watcher, and when I see the signs, then I start looking for the rapture. The problem with that idea is that there are no signs of the rapture. It's a signless event. There are no signs that we are near the Rapture. Now there are signs that indicate nearness to the Second Coming, but those signs begin after the Rapture, not before. So they as well as we are **awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**. He will come for us from heaven and He will take us to Himself in heaven.

Verse 8, **who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. That is, He's going to finish what He started. He who began a good work in you, will He not carry it out until the day of Christ Jesus? He's the one that keeps you saved, you don't keep yourself saved. The problem with the loss of salvation people is they think they saved themselves, that's why they think they can unsave themselves. And logically that would be a sound argument. But the premise is wrong, you didn't save yourself, God saved you. God saves on the basis of grace, which is the cross work of Christ, and faith is an instrument through which God saves. But faith never saved anyone; faith is the means by which God saves. And therefore logically it is only God who can unsave you, but He's promised never to do that.

As verse 9. **God is faithful**. But the rest of verse 8, **blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ**. that's the day of the Rapture again, on that day we will be found **blameless**, implying resurrection, we will be raised to new life, all believers will be finally sanctified, completed in an ultimate sense where we have no more sinful flesh, our salvation will be complete, we'll be **blameless**.

Verse 9, **God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord**. God is the agent

through whom you were called. At some point in your life God called you out of the world. You didn't get saved without God calling you, God tugged on you and you may have rejected for awhile, but finally God called and it was irresistible, you wanted to come to Him, He made you willing to come to Him and if He had not done that then you never would have come to Him.

And what he called you **into** was **fellowship** or intimacy **with His Son**, and that shows that the moment you were called to salvation you were instantaneously in fellowship with Jesus Christ. Now you may have lost it five minutes later, but the point here is that, if this is the condition which God called them into, then shouldn't they stay in fellowship with the Lord by confessing their sins? Of course they should, and that's part of the logic Paul is setting up for the carnal Corinthians.

Alright, keep in mind as we go further that the Corinthians had imputed a high value to sophistry, but Paul imputes a high value to God's gifts, and therefore Paul is going to collide with the methods of sophistry which were being used as mediums for the gospel, but which Paul says detaches all power from the gospel. Winning people to Christ is not by slick maneuvers. It is by preaching the truth so that the power by which men are saved rests not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of the Spirit.

¹ W.H. Griffith Thomas, *The Holy Spirit of God*, 48-49.

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