

*1 Corinthians 1:6-9***PREFACE**

Very often one can outline or organize any Scripture passage a number of ways; come to think of it, that might serve as a profitable hobby or avocation: *outlining books of the Bible for fun and profit!*

The respected scholar and commentator D. A. Carson organizes these opening verses of Chapter One—after the greeting—thus:

vv4-9: empirical evidence of their sanctification

vv10-12: empirical evidence of what is missing in their sanctification

vv13-17: biblical evidence of what is needed in their sanctification

This reveals the balanced approach Paul brings to this letter. He balances criticism of their behavior with, if not praise, at least acknowledgment of their laudable, God-given qualities. He then follows this up with constructive counsel on what is needed—in their case, the need to reestablish the centrality of Christ and the centrality of the gospel in their lives.

C. H. Spurgeon: It was very wise of Paul thus to praise these Corinthians where they could be praised, for he was about to upbraid them and reprove them for many things which were not pleasing to God. If you have the unpleasant duty of rebuking those who deserve it, always take care that you begin by saying all that you can, and all that you ought, in their favor; it will prepare the way for what you have to say to them afterwards.

That seems like a pretty good way to approach the situation in the Corinthian church—diplomatic, yet constructive. Paul's intent is not to make them into something they are not, but to improve what they already are. And he begins this process, in the passage we are currently in, by reinforcing them with the obvious evidence that *they are indeed sanctified*. They belong to Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-7.

Let me reiterate the shorthand for v6 I suggested in our previous session:

Paul came.
Paul preached.
The Spirit came.
The Spirit empowered. Thus,
Testimony confirmed.

Paul's work among them bore fruit, and this was confirmed by the Spirit graciously and abundantly dispensing gifts to them. And v7 clarifies this.

so that you are not lacking in any gift

I confess to being bothered by the all-encompassing scope of Paul's remarks in this passage.

v5: that in **everything** you were enriched in Him, in **all** speech and **all** knowledge

v7: you are not lacking in **any** gift

We know instinctively, as well as from what comes later in this letter, that it cannot *literally* be true that every member of the Corinthian church was endowed and imbued with *every* spiritual gift—and that to the full. So the problem must be in our understanding of what Paul is saying. And we may discover a clue to this when we compare the KJVs to the rest of our modern translations of v7.

KJV: So that ye come behind in no gift...

NKJV: so that you come short in no gift...

The NASB and ESV *could* be in agreement with this; they could mean “you are not lacking ~~in~~ any gift” (i.e., [you have all the gifts](#)) or “you are not lacking in any gift *you have*.” With the inclusion of “in” it seems to point to the latter—and in agreement with the KJVs. That is, *the Corinthians do not fall short in the area of gifts when compared to other churches*.

Paul will reinforce this interpretation in Chapter Thirteen.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:9-10, 12.

He says that, at best, we presently know just a mere portion of what there is to know. So perhaps the best way to interpret these all-encompassing adjectives in Chapter One is that they, the Corinthians, have not been shortchanged; the Lord has not held back anything from them in the area of useful gifts.

awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We might say that in this preliminary “thanksgiving” passage of vv4-9 Paul is putting his best spin on the situation in Corinth. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, he is using this to cue up—or lay the groundwork for—the more substantial exhortations that will come later in this letter.

The awkward juxtaposition of the verse's two clauses ([what does a wealth of spiritual gifts have to do with Christ's return?](#)) forces us to consider that Paul must have something specific, and perhaps deeper in mind.

The Corinthians were proud of their gifts, and Paul's intention was to not just get rid of their pride and show them a more righteous way of putting them to use, but to also make the point that *this is not as good as it gets*—that the gifts we are privileged to have and use now pale in comparison to what we will enjoy later. [Keep your finger in Chapter One, but please return to Chapter Thirteen if you have left it.](#) This chapter answers with hard reality the congratulatory points made in our passage. It supplies a series of “buts” to each one.

Chapter One	Chapter Thirteen
v5: you were enriched in Him in all speech	v1: If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
v5: you were enriched in Him...in all knowledge	v8c: if there is knowledge, it will be done away v12b: now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.
v7: you are not lacking in any gift	v9-10: For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

[Back to Chapter One.](#)

When will the partial be done away? When will the “perfect” come? Verse 7b: at “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” See how these two clauses work together now!

The ESV is too soft here (“as you wait”). This is Paul’s traditional word used to express the believer’s expectant, joyful anticipation of the End Times, and the return of Christ Jesus.

apekdechomai = from <G575> (apo) and <G1551> (ekdechomai); to expect fully
:- look (wait) for; “[an eager expectancy](#)” ([Robertson](#)).

David Garland has a nice turn of phrase to interpret v7.

Garland: Instead of standing on their dignity as those enriched with speech and knowledge, they should be standing on tiptoe in anticipation of what is to come when God will establish or confirm them as blameless on the day of the Lord.

John MacArthur adds that this Greek word also includes the idea of activity: we are not just waiting expectantly; *while* we are waiting we remain active, we are working for the kingdom.

vv8-9

We could easily devote an entire session—indeed, multiple sessions—to the glorious promises contained in vv8-9. Talk about food for contemplation, for meditation! We await eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Note the progressive grace in this passage—progressive, but slightly out of chronological order. Back up a moment and take the long view.

1. By grace we are “called into fellowship” with Christ. (v9)
2. By grace we are apportioned spiritual gifts with which to serve Him and His church. (vv4-7a)
3. By grace we are “confirmed to the end,” declared “blameless” in the Day of the Lord. (v8)

Who does this? Do we slog it out, day after day, struggling to remain faithful to the One who has called us, fearful that we might miss out when this life draws to a close? No, “*God* is faithful” (Greek: “*Faithful is God*”). The One who called us into this relationship is the One who guarantees its fruition and culmination.

This is no small thing. This has been a point of division within the church for centuries. When I was growing up in the Baptist church of my youth this was referred to as the “eternal security of the believer”—i.e., “once saved, *always* saved.” As I understood it at the time, if I was a Christian, no matter what I did, no matter how badly I behaved, I would still go to heaven when I died.

The preferred terminology today is the “perseverance of the saints,” and here is how Wayne Grudem defines it.

Grudem: The perseverance of the saints means that all those who are truly born again will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again.

We could take a side road at this point and spend a few sessions detailing this, but what I would like to do instead is emphasize—as Paul does in our Corinthian text—*who* is responsible for this perseverance. Paul writes in vv8-9,

who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Even though the *apparent* antecedent to “*who*” at the beginning of v8 is “our Lord Jesus Christ” (v7b), in the context of this paragraph (vv4-9) the *logical* subject of the pronoun is God. Thus Paul does not call for the Corinthians to remain blameless by their own merits and effort; nor does he call for the Corinthians to be faithful in their Christian walk. Instead he encourages the church with the fact that Father God is the one who will be doing this.

- *God* will confirm you
- *God* will keep you blameless
- *God* is the one (not you) who remains faithful

This hearkens back to the faithful God of the OT. Jews in the Corinthian church reading or hearing this letter would nod their heads in sage agreement that God is indeed faithful. One can trace His faithfulness all the way from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22—but there is a difference at times between the OT and NT. Listen carefully to what Yahweh says in the law.

Read Deuteronomy 7:9-11.

Hear how the responsibility is ultimately placed on the individual to keep the law; God is indeed faithful—*if...* Now let’s close with the NT version.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

Here’s the difference: Under the law, God was faithful—to *those who kept his commandments*. In Christ Jesus, *God* is faithful to keep you to the end.

Period.