

Gratitude in the Life of Paul

Gratitude for the Church

- I. Gratitude for God's Blessings upon Others (1 Corinthians 1:4-8)
 - A. Paul was thankful for the blessings of God in his own life.
 - B. However, he was not selfish or stingy when it came to God's blessings.
 - C. Paul was thankful to God for His blessings upon others.
 - D. Paul was even thankful that the church at Corinth had been blessed by God – in spite of their divisive attitudes and actions.
 - E. Gratitude will help to guard our hearts against jealousy, envy, and hatred.
 - 1. Some look upon the blessings of others with jealousy and envy.
 - 2. They wonder why God blessed others but did not bless them in the same way.
 - 3. If not checked, they will begin to have feelings of anger and hatred toward others, even wishing ill upon them.
 - 4. Gratitude will remove these negative and sinful attitudes.
 - F. We should view God's blessings in the lives of others as demonstrations of His goodness and love that all may see (cf. Luke 1:57-58).

- II. Gratitude for Unity in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:14-15)
 - A. This statement of gratitude by Paul is, perhaps, one of the strangest.
 - B. Paul declared that he was thankful that he personally had not baptized many in Corinth who had obeyed the Gospel.
 - 1. This does not mean that Paul was against baptism.
 - 2. It does not mean that baptism is not essential for salvation.
 - 3. Paul clearly taught the necessity of baptism for forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; etc.).
 - 4. The New Testament also teaches this truth (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; etc.).
 - C. What Paul meant was that even though baptism is essential, the person who does the baptizing is not.
 - 1. The Christians in Corinth were dividing themselves over personalities of men (1:12-13).
 - 2. Paul was thankful that he had not baptized many of them so they could not use his name as a means of division in the church.
 - 3. Jesus demonstrated this same principle in His life by allowing His disciples to do the baptizing rather than Himself (John 4:1-2).
 - D. The lesson is this: Paul desired true unity in the church above all else.
 - 1. No matter who got the credit
 - 2. No matter what wrong had to be suffered (1 Cor. 6:7)
 - 3. So long as God was honored and the church was edified
 - E. He was thankful that his actions promoted unity in Christ, not division.
 - F. We must live in such a way that we can be grateful for the same.

- III. Gratitude for Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 14:18-20)
- A. Spiritual gifts were miraculous abilities given to Christians by the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by an Apostle of Jesus (Acts 8:18; 19:6; 2 Tim. 1:6).
 - B. The purpose of these gifts was two-fold:
 - 1. To reveal the Word of God by inspiration
 - 2. To confirm the Word of God by signs (Mark 16:20; Acts 8:6; Heb. 2:3-4)
 - C. Different gifts were given to different people, yet the goal was the same – to strengthen and encourage the church (1 Cor. 12).
 - D. In Corinth, some Christians were allowing these gifts to cause division in the church.
 - 1. Some thought one gift was better than another.
 - 2. Thus, they felt that some Christians were superior to others.
 - 3. This was true particularly with the gift of speaking in tongues.
 - E. In dispelling this false view of spiritual gifts, Paul declared that he was thankful for these gifts.
 - F. Today, we do not possess and cannot receive miraculous abilities (1 Cor. 13:8-13).
 - G. However, we should still be thankful for them.
 - 1. Because of their miraculous gifts, we have the New Testament.
 - 2. Because of their spiritual gifts, the Bible is confirmed to be the Word of God.
 - H. We also should be thankful for the talents and abilities with which God has blessed us – and show our gratitude in word and in faithful service.

- IV. Gratitude for Victory over the Grave (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)
- A. Death is described clearly in Scripture.
 - 1. It is an enemy of man (1 Cor. 15:26).
 - 2. It is powerful (Hosea 13:14).
 - 3. It is an insatiable predator (Prov. 30:15-16).
 - 4. It is a weapon used by Satan (Heb. 2:14-15).
 - 5. It is an appointment all must keep (Heb. 9:27).
 - B. Yet, Paul – on the road to Damascus – saw the resurrected Jesus!
 - 1. This proved that Jesus is the Messiah.
 - 2. This proved the error of Paul's persecution of the church.
 - 3. This proved the defeat of Satan, sin, and death.
 - C. This vision confirmed the resurrection and showed that all men will be raised.
 - D. Thus, Paul was thankful for victory over the grave through Jesus.
 - E. In Christ, that victory belongs to every Christian.
 - F. We should give thanks to God for our victory.
 - G. We should live victoriously as diligent servants of our Lord.