GBC, Hebron BP, IBC, CIC, CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

19 April 98, 3 May 98, 8 Aug 04, 21 Jan 07, 2 Sep 12 Message 1 of 24

NIV 40 Minutes

**What to Do?**

Title

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

**Topic:** Hope

**Subject:** Why thank God even for a struggling church?

**Complement:** Because God Himself guarantees our ultimate success!

**Purpose:** The listeners will thank God that they can focus not on who they *appear* to be, but on who they *really* are—set apart and blameless.

# Introduction

### Most of us do well about giving thanks for our food, but…

Food

### We’re supposed to be thankful in all situations (1 Thess. 5:18), but…

1 Th 5:18

#### Giving thanks is not natural for us even in easy situations. In many ways, Crossroads is doing quite well.

Thanks!

##### The music ministry is stabilized.

Pros

##### We will begin home groups next week.

##### The finances are doing well.

##### Giving to missions is a joy as we seek to give 20% of offerings to ministries outside of Singapore.

##### The leadership team has returned from summer travels and is looking to the future.

##### Best of all, Crossroads is a united church with no political agendas!

##### Giving thanks is not natural for us even in good situations like we find ourselves now.

#### Giving thanks is even harder during struggling times. Despite these benefits, in reality, we are a church still in transition with much to do.

• Cons

##### We need to stabilize our plan for children’s ministry.

##### We need to finalize the plan as it relates to me as pastor-teacher.

##### We need to develop more elders and leaders for various ministries.

##### We need to discern how best to disciple our members.

### So, what do you do with a church like ours that’s in transition? We have our struggles, but every church around the world is also in transition. In most countries the church is plagued by problems in worship, doctrine, impurity, divisions, etc.

Changes

Ship

### In contrast to today’s struggling church, we often think that the first century church was holy.

1st Cent.

#### They often worshipped underground, but still unbelievers said, “Look how they love one other!”

Cata-combs

#### Their care for each other caused the church to grow so fast that it reached throughout the Roman Empire by the end of the first century!

#### Idol-makers even got jealous that the commitment and growth of the holy church to the point of death had caused people to turn from idols.

Martyr

### But was the first century church holier than ours today? Well, Paul had even more major problems than we do today with the church at Corinth.

Really?  
• Corinth

#### By the time Paul wrote this letter he had already had two missionary journeys that spread the gospel all the way from Antioch, Syria over to Greece, where Corinth was.

3MJ Map

#### While in Ephesus, Paul got bad news about the church, so he sent this letter across the Aegean Sea to these struggling believers.

#### Let’s see how this church was established in The Visual Bible depiction of Acts 18… (show VCD of Acts 18).

Acts 18 VCD

### First Corinthians notes that the church at Corinth was a pain in the rear for Paul…

#### *Divorce*: In chapter 7 some Corinthians felt that since God was for Christian marriage, believing partners should divorce their unbelieving spouses to marry Christians. Others felt that the ideal Christian shouldn’t even marry at all.

\* Divorce

#### *Idolatry:* They ate in pagan banquets and worshipped demons (chs. 8–10).

\* Idolatry

#### *Gifts*: They got so thrilled with the idea of spiritual gifts that everyone wanted to show off their gifts at the same time—it was chaos (chs. 12–14)!

\* Gifts

#### *Sexual immorality:* This church even thought it good for one of their members to go to bed with his stepmother. “Nice to be so free!” they said (ch. 5).

\* Incest

### Question: So *how* did Paul respond to God about the struggling Corinthian church?

• 1:4

How?

### Answer: He thanked God for the rotten Corinthian church in verse 4: “I always thank God for you…”! You say, “Oh, really? Sure he did!” No, he did!

• really?

### Intro. MPI: But *why* did Paul thank God even for the struggling Corinthian church?

Why?

# I. Paul focused not on who the Corinthians appeared to be, but on who they really were (1:1-9)!

MP

[He praised God that the seemingly far-from-perfect Corinthians were actually saints:   
past, present, and future.]

## Past: Paul called themset apart for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

A.

### [Author]: Paul called himself an apostle. But what’s an apostle? (1)

Apostle

#### Apostles were *set apart* for God’s special purposes with a unique job description [explain slide].

JD

#### The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out”—and Paul, like all the apostles, was sent out by Christ Himself—even to the extent of being the key church planter of the first century and the one who began the church at Corinth.

Define

### [Recipients]: But who were the Corinthians and when did Paul write them? (2)

Body

#### He wrote in AD 56 when Corinth was a large seaport city like Singapore.

3MJ

##### Over 80,000 people lived there—a large city of its day. [Blomberg, 19]

• Large

##### Corinth was Greece’s wealthiest city.

• Wealthy

##### Corinth was also a major multicultural urban center—Jews, Greeks, Romans, and other nationalities lived together.

• Multi-cult

##### Multi-religious too. Temples for Asclepius, Greek god of healing—and sites to worship Isis, Egyptian goddess of seafarers along with her Greek counterpart Poseidon. Sounds somewhat like our Singapore Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist places of worship.

• Multi-rel

##### Also, it was like our country in that it had plenty of food brought in the city by farmers—and Corinth was a hub for necessary services in the countryside.

Map (auto)

• Food

##### It had a strategic location between two seas like Singapore does.

###### Ships passing between the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean Sea used to sail 366 kilometers around the Corinthian Peninsula. Then a shortcut over the 7 km Isthmus of Corinth developed on this close-up view. Why not just use the canal? It wasn’t dug until about 2000 years later!

Canal

7 KM

###### But the ancient isthmus did give rise to a ship rolling business. Special crews rolled ships on logs for seven kilometers (and 100 meters up a hill!) across this isthmus. This gave sailors a few days “liberty” in nearby Corinth before joining their ship on the other side. Where did they go in Corinth? To the 1000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, adding to the already depraved state of the city.

Isthmus

(auto)

Ruins

##### So Corinth was impressive but also a rotten city, morally speaking—so much so that “Corinthian girl” became slang for a loose woman in Roman times.

Corinth Girl

Aphrodite

#### But what about the *Church* at Corinth?

##### This group of believers had come to know the Lord during Paul’s 18-month stay in Corinth in AD 51-52.

Believers

##### Now, 4 years later, Paul writes to these still relatively new believers.

##### Like most churches, this church had become like the culture of its day.

##### With this background, notice Paul’s two ways to describe them in verse 2:

Describe

###### First, he says they were sanctified.

* Sanct

What’s “sanctified” mean? It means “set apart”!

It means that God already determined their position—reserved or set apart to serve God. Past tense! God already considered them *holy.*

###### Second, they were called by God to be holy in their day-to-day living.

* Sanct
* holy

If they were *already* holy, why say they were *called* to be holy?

3 tenses

This means the church was to make their position their practice.

### Also notice the dual greeting of grace and peace in verse 3.

#### “Grace” is the typical Greek and Roman greeting—but it reminds the church of the free gift of salvation in Christ.

Grace & Peace

#### “Peace” is the typical Jewish salutation—meaning wholeness in all aspects of life.

(Now let’s be honest here. If you were writing to a rotten church, would you call them “set apart” and “holy”? Not me! Equally amazing are verses 4-9 which show Paul thanking God for these guys! Why did he give thanks?)

Present

## Present: Paul thanked God for the blessings they already enjoyed (1:4-7).

### For one, God gave them—and us—His grace (4).

#### What’s grace? Grace is God *giving* us what we *don’t* deserve. Mercy is God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve.

Grace v. Mercy

#### John Newton said, “When I get to heaven I will see three wonders there. The first wonder will be to *see* many people whom I didn’t expect to see. The second wonder will be to *miss* many people whom I did expect to see, and the third and greatest wonder of all, will be to find *myself* there.” Tan 2095

Newton

### But God gave them every spiritual gift they needed (5-7).

Body of Christ

#### The abilities related to speaking and knowledge probably refer to gifts of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues—perhaps teaching too.

#### Does verse 7 mean all the gifts will last until the return of Christ? That’s how some interpret it. But I’m not so sure. It is present tense so it has more of the idea that at the time of writing the church was blessed with every spiritual gift. It needed no more than it already had.

(But how could Paul be so positive about a church just filled with divisions and flagrant abuses of even God’s gifts? Verses 8-9 supply the answer…)

## Future: God Himself assures that they would eventually become perfect (1:8-9).

Perfect

### I have some questions about verse 8:

#### What does it mean that God would keep them “strong to the end”?

#### Does this mean every Christian will persevere in his faith—especially since this church was hardly spiritually strong when Paul wrote?

#### What about people who fall away?

### These are very big questions that deserve much greater treatment than I can give today, but here are at least some preliminary answers.

#### Salvation is by faith in Christ—not works before or after salvation.

Guarantees

• Faith

#### To some extent every Christian has fallen away, haven’t we?

• Relative

##### If there’s anyone here who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone! When we talk about backslidden Christians, in reality we’re talking about us all, since none of us has totally lived up to God’s demands.

##### So the issue of backsliding is not one of *“who* has done it?” but *“how much* has each of us done it?”

##### It’s not an issue of *person* but of *degree*!

#### If salvation was based on continued obedience, of all churches, the church at Corinth would be the one that wouldn’t make it. Yet, ironically, some of the clearest texts in the NT supporting the once-saved-always-saved view are in this letter! This letter—to the most carnal church in the NT!

Security

##### They are assured that they would one day be blameless in this verse.

• 1:8

##### In 5:5 Paul said to discipline a man in the church who was going to bed with his stepmother “so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord”! Now you don’t get much farther backslidden than public sin that the whole church knew about and bragged about according to 5:2! Yet even this man is assured salvation!

• 5:5

##### Also, 6:2-3 says that all the believers to some extent would judge angels.

• 6:2-3

##### And 12:13 notes that every one of them was baptised into the body of Christ. Can we or they get spiritually unbaptised?!

• 12:13

##### Chapter 15 assures them that they all will be resurrected.

• Ch 15

##### The idea that their salvation would be complete just permeates this letter, as well as 2 Corinthians 1:21-22.

• 2 Co 1:21-22

(But I can hear some of you thinking, “How can this be? How can this guy say that everyone who genuinely trusts Christ will be saved?” The answer is actually throughout this entire introduction to the letter—simply that…)

### God guarantees our salvation.

GOD

#### Now note that I’m talking about those who are *really* saved—not just any of us who *says* he is saved but has no evidence in his life. The Corinthian church had its problems, but there still was some evidence of life there!

#### And this life is from God—the reason we are saved is not because of us—it’s because of God!

Text

#### Did you notice the great emphasis on God and Christ in this passage?

##### I highlighted how many times “Lord,” “Jesus” and “Christ” and pronouns are noted in these nine verses. It’s 26 times in nine verses!

##### And words for God are mentioned another 8 times! See the blue.

##### That’s 34 times the first two members of the Trinity are noted here. Do you think God was trying to tell the church something through Paul?

##### Paul is starting his letter with a clear emphasis that, even though this was a rotten church, God would guarantee its ultimate success!

(And isn’t He trying to tell us the same thing? Even if we were struggled as much as the church at Corinth, we also should give thanks. Why? We should…)

II

# II. Thank God for who we really are and will be.

## Thank God that He has set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

• Set apart

### Never in the NT are believers called “sinners”—we’re called “saints”!

### God has a unique role for us to play in this society—and that excites me!

## Thank God for the same blessings that we enjoy *now* (cf. 1:4-7).

• Blessed

## Thank God that we will be as blameless as the Corinthians (1:8-9).

• Blame-less

### Are we everything that God wants it to be? No—but God says that we will be! These things for which we can be thankful cover our past, present and future!

• past • pres • fut

### Dr. Michael Shen, former principal of Singapore Bible College, once saw his daughter Anna reading the famous book by Paul Bunyon called *Pilgrim’s Progress.* He noticed that she was about a fourth the way through the book. An hour later as he passed her he saw she was at the end. “Wah, how incredible my daughter is,” he thought. “So clever that she reads so fast.” When he asked her about it, she smiled and said, “The story is so exciting it made me nervous—whether Christian will be able to survive to the end or not—so I jumped to the end first, to see whether he is still alive or not.”

Pilgrim’s Progress

### Verse 9 says, “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” Faithful to do what? To present us blameless before Him!

### God has enabled us to see the end of the story now!

(I don’t know about you, but for me, this causes me to…)

# Conclusion

### Why thank God even for a struggling church? Because God Himself guarantees our ultimate success (Main Idea).

MI

### Are we a church in transition? Sure. But what church isn’t?

transition

### Are we a church that still has a way to go to be called holy? Yes again. But God is the one who promises to lead us to perfection—all by His grace!

What to do?

### So how should we respond?

• Pilgrim

#### Be holy (1:2).

##### Put away any sin that hinders your walk with God—not because if you don’t you’ll lose your salvation—but so that God won’t have to do such a major overhaul on you when you get to heaven!

• holy

##### Can you think of a sin that God has recently given you victory over? Are you growing in holiness?

#### Be thankful (1:4).

• thank

##### Thank Him right now that His plan for this church will ultimately succeed—for God never called anyone to a task in which he ultimately failed.

##### When was the last time you thanked God for this church?

• serve

#### Be serving (1:7).

##### This church also has all the gifts that we need—but we must put them to use.

##### If someone asked you what your unique role is at CIC, what would you say?

#### Be humble—the whole passage emphasizes God’s work, not ours.

• humble

Black

### Prayer

### “Were It Not for Grace” solo

5 slides

A woman, reflecting on her childhood, wrote…[“The Rich Family in Our Church” by Eddie Ogan]

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was 14, my little sister Ocy, 12, and my older sister Darlene, 16. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without many things.

My dad had died 5 years before, leaving Mom with seven school kids to raise and no money. By 1946 my older sisters were married, and my brothers had left home.

A month before Easter, the pastor of our church announced that a special Easter offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially. When we got home, we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy 50 pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save $20 of our grocery money for the offering. Then we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible and didn't listen to the radio, we'd save money on that month's electric bill. Darlene got as many house and yard cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us baby sat for everyone we could. For 15 cents, we could buy enough cotton loops to make three pot holders to sell for $1. We made $20 on pot holders.

That month was one of the best of our lives. Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about 80 people in church, so we figured that whatever amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be 20 times that much. After all, every Sunday the Pastor had reminded everyone to save for the sacrificial offering.

The day before Easter, Ocy and I walked to the grocery store and got the manager to give us three crisp $20 bills and one $10 bill for all our change. We ran all the way home to show Mom and Darlene. We had never had so much money before. That night we were so excited we could hardly sleep. We didn't care that we wouldn't have new clothes for Easter; we had $70 for the sacrificial offering. We could hardly wait to get to church!

On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet. But we sat in church proudly. I heard some teenagers talking about the Smith girls having on their old dresses. I looked at them in their new clothes, and I felt so rich.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting on the second row from the front. Mom put in the $10 bill, and each of us girls put in a $20. As we walked home after church, we sang all the way. At lunch Mom had a surprise for us. She had bought a dozen eggs, and we had boiled Easter eggs with our fried potatoes! Late that afternoon the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp $20 bills, one $10 and seventeen $1 bills. Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk, just sat and stared at the floor. We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling like poor white trash. We kids had had such a happy life that we felt sorry for anyone who didn't have our mom and dad for parents and a house full of brothers and sisters and other kids visiting constantly. We thought it was fun to share silverware and see whether we got the fork or the spoon that night. We had two knives which we passed around to whoever needed them.

I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I'd never thought we were poor. That Easter Day I found out we were. The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so we must be poor. I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed that I didn't want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor! I thought about school. I was in the ninth grade and at the top of my class of over 100 students. I wondered if the kids at school knew we were poor. I decided I could quit school since I had finished the eighth grade. That was all the law required at that time.

We sat in silence for a long time. Then it got dark, and we went to bed. All that week, we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally on Saturday, Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money. What did poor people do with money? We didn't know.

We'd never known we were poor. We didn't want to go to church on Sunday, but Mom said we had to. Although it was a sunny day, we didn't talk on the way. Mom started to sing, but no one joined in and she only sang one verse.

At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they need money to buy roofs. He said $100 would put a roof on a church. The minister said, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?"

We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week. Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope. She passed it to Darlene. Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering. When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over $100. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church." Suddenly it struck us! We had given $87 of that "little over $100." We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on I've never been poor again. I've always remembered how rich I am because I have Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is this church rich too?

That depends on how much each of us realizes and uses what we have in Christ.

GBC, Hebron BP, IBC, CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

19 April 98, 3 May 98, 8 Aug 04, 21 Jan 07 Message 1 of 24

NIV 60 Minutes

**Why Say “Yea”?**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

**Topic:** Hope

**Subject:** We should thank God even when we are struggling (Why say, “Yea”?)

**Complement:** Thank God for who we really are and will be.

**Purpose:** The listeners will thank God that they can focus not on who they *appear* to be, but on who they *really* are—set apart and blameless.

# Introduction

Title

#31

### Happy Anniversary, everybody! Isn’t it wonderful to celebrate our anniversary today? Huh? What anniversary? Well, this is our tenth Sunday as a church now, so it’s good reason to celebrate.

Happy Ann

#### Crossroads has had a good start these first ten weeks.

Growth Chart

##### Attendance: Our first service on November 19 had 58 folks from 13 countries. As expected, things dipped a bit in the Christmas season when several went on home leave or mission trips or holidays, but attendance has steadily increased the past four weeks until today with 66 attending last Sunday.

##### Sunday School: The SS has stabilized under the direction of Grace Chan. She worships at another church in morning and feels fed enough there so that she can give out to our kids here each Sunday afternoon.

##### Music: The music team is developing with more instrumentalists and worship leaders coming forward.

##### Outreach: A common vision by some of our women to reach out to other women in Geylang is developing.

##### Missions: We have supported two ministries so far—helping Budmaa finance his final semester at SBC and supporting the Vietnam outreach through Thy.

##### Leadership: Tom Chandler and I have shared the preaching and spiritual leadership as co-pastor-teachers, ably assisted by Vong Yap. We meet weekly for prayer and planning and are genuinely united as a leadership team.

##### Scripture commands us to give thanks all the time in 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

Give thanks

##### Giving thanks is not natural for us even in good situations like we find ourselves now.

#### Giving thanks is even harder during struggling times. Despite the good start, in reality, we are a church still in transition with much to do.

Black

##### Our leadership is self-appointed and not elected, so you really haven’t even had a say in who your leaders should be.

##### We need to set policies on finances, missions, and a host of things.

##### We don’t have a Constitution yet. The leaders are tweaking it and about to present it to some members of the body before sending it to everyone. Then we’ll have a congregational meeting in February, I hope.

##### We are a legal entity under AsiaVenture, but not as a separate entity.

##### We have no checking account yet—we can’t until we’re an official church.

##### We don’t even have a legal name yet.

### So, what do you do with a church like ours that’s in transition? We have our struggles, but the church around the world is also in transition. In most countries the church is plagued by problems in worship, doctrine, impurity, divisions, etc. Otherwise why would these cartoons make it into our church life? (Show cartoons)

Cartoons

Cartoons

Cartoons

### In contrast to today’s church, we often think that the first century church was holy.

1st Cent.

#### They often worshipped underground, but still unbelievers said, “Look how they love one other!”

Cata-combs

#### Their care for each other caused the church to grow so fast that it reached throughout the Roman empire by the end of the first century!

#### Idol-makers even got jealous that the commitment and growth of the holy church to the point of death had caused people to turn from idols.

Martyr

### But was the first century church holier than ours today? Well, Paul had even more major problems than we do today with the church at Corinth.

Really?

#### By the time Paul wrote this letter he had already had two missionary journeys that spread the gospel all the way from Antioch, Syria over to Greece, where Corinth was.

3MJ

(auto)

#### While in Ephesus, Paul got bad news about the church, so he sent this letter across the Aegean Sea to these struggling believers.

#### Let’s see how this church was established in The Visual Bible depiction of Acts 18… (show VCD of Acts 18).

Acts 18 VCD

### First Corinthians notes that the church at Corinth was a pain in the rear for Paul…

#### *Divorce*: In chapter 7 some Corinthians felt that since God was for Christian marriage, believing partners should divorce their unbelieving spouses to marry Christians. Others felt that the ideal Christian shouldn’t even marry at all.

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#### *Gifts*: They got so thrilled with the idea of spiritual gifts that everyone wanted to show off their gifts at the same time—it was chaos (chs. 12–14)! And many in the church didn’t even believe in the resurrection (ch. 15).

\* Gifts

#### *Sexual immorality:* This church even thought it good for one of their members to go to bed with his stepmother. “Nice to be so free!” they said (ch. 5).

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### Question: So *how* did Paul respond to God about the rotten Corinthian church?

Black

### Answer: He thanked God for the rotten Corinthian church in verse 4: “I always thank God for you…”!

Why?

### Intro. MPI: But *why* did Paul thanks God for this church? Why say, “Yeah”?

# I. Paul thanked God for this struggling church because he focused not on who they appeared to be, but on who they really were (1:1-9)!

MPI

[He praised God that the seemingly far-from-perfect Corinthians were actually saints:   
past, present, and future.]

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A.

### [Author]: Paul called himself an apostle. But what’s an apostle? (1)

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#### Apostles were set apart for God’s special purposes just like the Corinthians were.

#### The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out”—and Paul, like all the apostles, was sent out by Christ Himself—even to the extent of being the key church planter of the first century and the one who began the church at Corinth.

### [Recipients]: But who were the Corinthians and when did Paul write them? (2)

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Date

##### Over 80,000 people lived there—a large city of its day. [Blomberg, 19]

##### Corinth was Greece’s wealthiest city.

##### Corinth was also a major multicultural urban center—Jews, Greeks, Romans, and other nationalities lived together.

##### Multi-religious too. Temples for Asclepius, Greek god of healing—and sites to worship Isis, Egyptian goddess of seafarers along with her Greek counterpart Poseidon. Sounds somewhat like our Singapore Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist places of worship.

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##### Also, it was like our country in that it had plenty of food brought in the city by farmers—and Corinth was a hub for necessary services in the countryside.

##### It had a strategic location between two seas like Singapore does.

Map (auto)

###### Ships passing between the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean Sea used to sail 366 kilometers around the Corinthian Peninsula. Then a shortcut over the Isthmus of Corinth developed.

Isthmus

(auto)

###### This gave rise to a ship rolling business on this close-up view. Special crews rolled ships on logs for seven kilometers (and 100 meters up a hill!) across this isthmus. This gave sailors a few days “liberty” in nearby Corinth before joining their ship on the other side. Where did they go in Corinth? To the 1000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, adding to the already depraved state of the city.

##### So Corinth was impressive but also a rotten city, morally speaking—so much so that “Corinthian girl” became slang for a loose woman in Roman times.

Ruins

Aphrodite

#### But what about the *Church* at Corinth?

Black

##### This group of believers had come to know the Lord during Paul’s 18-month stay in Corinth in AD 51-52.

##### Now, 4 years later, Paul writes to these still relatively new believers.

##### Like most churches, this church had become like the culture of its day.

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##### With this background, notice Paul’s two ways to describe them in verse 2:

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What’s “sanctified” mean? It means “set apart”!

It means that God already determined their position—reserved or set apart to serve God. Past tense! God already considered them *holy.*

###### Second, they were called by God to be holy in their day-to-day living.

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This means the church was to make their position their practice.

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#### “Grace” is the typical Greek and Roman greeting—but it reminds the church of the free gift of salvation in Christ.

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(Now let’s be honest here. If you were writing to a rotten church, would you call them “set apart” and “holy”? Not me! Equally amazing are verses 4-9 which show Paul thanking God for these guys! Why did he give thanks?)

Present

## Present: Paul thanked God for the blessings they already enjoyed (1:4-7).

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Grace v. Mercy

Black

#### John Newton said, “When I get to heaven I will see three wonders there. The first wonder will be to *see* many people whom I didn’t expect to see. The second wonder will be to *miss* many people whom I did expect to see, and the third and greatest wonder of all, will be to find *myself* there.” Tan 2095

Newton

### But God gave them every spiritual gift they needed (5-7).

Black

#### The abilities related to speaking and knowledge probably refer to gifts of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues—perhaps teaching too.

#### Does verse 7 mean all the gifts will last until the return of Christ? That’s how some interpret it. But I’m not so sure. It is present tense so it has more of the idea that at the time of writing the church was blessed with every spiritual gift. It needed no more than it already had.

(But how could Paul be so positive about a church just filled with divisions and flagrant abuses of even God’s gifts? Why say, “Yea”? Verses 8-9 supply the answer…)

## Future: God Himself assures that they would eventually become perfect (1:8-9).

Perfect

### I have some questions about verse 8:

#### What does it mean that God would keep them “strong to the end”?

#### Does this mean every Christian will persevere in his faith—especially since this church was hardly spiritually strong when Paul wrote?

#### What about people who fall away?

### These are very big questions that deserve much greater treatment than I can give today, but here are at least some preliminary answers.

#### Salvation is by faith in Christ—not works before or after salvation.

Guarantees

• Faith

#### To some extent every Christian has fallen away, haven’t we?

• Relative

##### If there’s anyone here who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone! When we talk about backslidden Christians, in reality we’re talking about us all, since none of us has totally lived up to God’s demands.

##### So the issue of backsliding is not one of *“who* has done it?” but *“how much* has each of us done it?”

##### It’s not an issue of *person* but of *degree*!

#### If salvation was based on continued obedience, of all churches, the church at Corinth would be the one that wouldn’t make it. Yet, ironically, some of the clearest texts in the NT supporting the once-saved-always-saved view are in this letter! This letter—to the most carnal church in the NT!

• Once-All

##### They are assured that they would one day be blameless in this verse.

• 1:8

##### In 5:5 Paul said to discipline a man in the church who was going to bed with his stepmother “so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord”! Now you don’t get much farther backslidden than public sin that the whole church knew about and bragged about according to 5:2! Yet even this man is assured salvation!

• 5:5

##### Also, 6:2-3 says that all the believers to some extent would judge angels.

• 6:2-3

##### And 12:13 notes that every one of them was baptised into the body of Christ. Can we or they get spiritually unbaptised?!

• 12:13

##### Chapter 15 assures them that they all will be resurrected.

• Ch 15

##### The idea that their salvation would be complete just permeates this letter.

(But I can hear some of you thinking, “How can this be? How can this guy say that everyone who genuinely trusts Christ will be saved?” The answer is actually throughout this entire introduction to the letter—simply that…)

### God guarantees our salvation.

#### Now note that I’m talking about those who are *really* saved—not just any of us who *says* he is saved but has no evidence in his life. The Corinthian church had its problems, but there still was some evidence of life there!

#### And this life is from God—the reason we are saved is not because of us—it’s because of God!

Text

#### Did you notice the great emphasis on God and Christ in this passage?

##### I highlighted how many times “Lord,” “Jesus” and “Christ” and pronouns are noted in these nine verses. It’s 26 times in nine verses!

##### And words for God are mentioned another 8 times! See the blue.

##### That’s 34 times the first two members of the Trinity are noted here. Do you think God was trying to tell the church something through Paul?

##### Paul is starting his letter with a clear emphasis that, even though this was a rotten church, God would guarantee its ultimate success!

Black

(And isn’t He trying to tell us the same thing? Now some here may have already made the assumption that I think this is a rotten church. No, not at all. But even if we were, we also should give thanks—even if we did have a rotten church. Why? We should…)

II

# II. Thank God for who we really are and will be (Main Idea).

## Thank God that He has set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

Bullets

### Never in the NT are believers called “sinners”—we’re called “saints”!

### God has a unique role for us to play in this society—and that excites me!

## Thank God for the same blessings that we enjoy (cf. 1:4-7).

## Thank God that we will be as blameless as the Corinthians (1:8-9).

### Are we everything that God wants it to be? No—but God says that we will be!

### Dr. Michael Shen, former principal of Singapore Bible College, once saw his daughter Anna reading the famous book by Paul Bunyon called *Pilgrim’s Progress.* He noticed that she was about a fourth the way through the book. An hour later as he passed her he saw she was at the end. “Wah, how incredible my daughter is,” he thought. “So clever that she reads so fast.” When he asked her about it, she smiled and said, “The story is so exciting it made me nervous—whether Christian will be able to survive to the end or not—so I jumped to the end first, to see whether he is still alive or not.”

Black

### Verse 9 says, “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” Faithful to do what? To present us blameless before Him!

### God has enabled us to see the end of the story now!

(I don’t know about you, but for me, this causes me to…)

# Conclusion

### Why say, “Yea”? Thank God for who we really are and will be (Main Idea).

MI again

### Are we a church in transition? Sure. But what church isn’t?

### Are we a church that still has a way to go to be called holy? Yes again. But God is the one who promises to lead us to perfection—all by His grace!

### So how should we respond?

What to do

#### Be holy (1:2).

\* holy

##### Put away any sin that hinders your walk with God—not because if you don’t you’ll lose your salvation—but so that God won’t have to do such a major overhaul on you when you get to heaven!

##### Can you think of a sin that God has recently given you victory over? Are you growing in holiness?

#### Be thankful (1:4).

\* thank

##### Thank Him right now that His plan for this church will ultimately succeed—for God never called anyone to a task in which he ultimately failed.

##### When was the last time you thanked God for this church?

\* serve

#### Be serving (1:7).

##### This church also has all the gifts that we need—but we must put them to use.

##### If someone asked you what your unique role is at CIC, what would you say?

\* humble

#### Be humble—the whole passage emphasizes God’s work, not ours.

5 slides

### “We It Not for Grace” solo

Black

A woman, reflecting on her childhood, wrote…[“The Rich Family in Our Church” by Eddie Ogan]

I'll never forget Easter 1946. I was 14, my little sister Ocy, 12, and my older sister Darlene, 16. We lived at home with our mother, and the four of us knew what it was to do without many things.

My dad had died 5 years before, leaving Mom with seven school kids to raise and no money. By 1946 my older sisters were married, and my brothers had left home.

A month before Easter, the pastor of our church announced that a special Easter offering would be taken to help a poor family. He asked everyone to save and give sacrificially. When we got home, we talked about what we could do. We decided to buy 50 pounds of potatoes and live on them for a month. This would allow us to save $20 of our grocery money for the offering. Then we thought that if we kept our electric lights turned out as much as possible and didn't listen to the radio, we'd save money on that month's electric bill. Darlene got as many house and yard cleaning jobs as possible, and both of us baby sat for everyone we could. For 15 cents, we could buy enough cotton loops to make three pot holders to sell for $1. We made $20 on pot holders.

That month was one of the best of our lives. Every day we counted the money to see how much we had saved. At night we'd sit in the dark and talk about how the poor family was going to enjoy having the money the church would give them. We had about 80 people in church, so we figured that whatever amount of money we had to give, the offering would surely be 20 times that much. After all, every Sunday the Pastor had reminded everyone to save for the sacrificial offering.

The day before Easter, Ocy and I walked to the grocery store and got the manager to give us three crisp $20 bills and one $10 bill for all our change. We ran all the way home to show Mom and Darlene. We had never had so much money before. That night we were so excited we could hardly sleep. We didn't care that we wouldn't have new clothes for Easter; we had $70 for the sacrificial offering. We could hardly wait to get to church!

On Sunday morning, rain was pouring. We didn't own an umbrella, and the church was over a mile from our home, but it didn't seem to matter how wet we got. Darlene had cardboard in her shoes to fill the holes. The cardboard came apart, and her feet got wet. But we sat in church proudly. I heard some teenagers talking about the Smith girls having on their old dresses. I looked at them in their new clothes, and I felt so rich.

When the sacrificial offering was taken, we were sitting on the second row from the front. Mom put in the $10 bill, and each of us girls put in a $20. As we walked home after church, we sang all the way. At lunch Mom had a surprise for us. She had bought a dozen eggs, and we had boiled Easter eggs with our fried potatoes! Late that afternoon the minister drove up in his car. Mom went to the door, talked with him for a moment, and then came back with an envelope in her hand. We asked what it was, but she didn't say a word. She opened the envelope and out fell a bunch of money. There were three crisp $20 bills, one $10 and seventeen $1 bills. Mom put the money back in the envelope. We didn't talk, just sat and stared at the floor. We had gone from feeling like millionaires to feeling like poor white trash. We kids had had such a happy life that we felt sorry for anyone who didn't have our mom and dad for parents and a house full of brothers and sisters and other kids visiting constantly. We thought it was fun to share silverware and see whether we got the fork or the spoon that night. We had two knives which we passed around to whoever needed them.

I knew we didn't have a lot of things that other people had, but I'd never thought we were poor. That Easter Day I found out we were. The minister had brought us the money for the poor family, so we must be poor. I didn't like being poor. I looked at my dress and worn-out shoes and felt so ashamed that I didn't want to go back to church. Everyone there probably already knew we were poor! I thought about school. I was in the ninth grade and at the top of my class of over 100 students. I wondered if the kids at school knew we were poor. I decided I could quit school since I had finished the eighth grade. That was all the law required at that time.

We sat in silence for a long time. Then it got dark, and we went to bed. All that week, we girls went to school and came home, and no one talked much. Finally on Saturday, Mom asked us what we wanted to do with the money. What did poor people do with money? We didn't know.

We'd never known we were poor. We didn't want to go to church on Sunday, but Mom said we had to. Although it was a sunny day, we didn't talk on the way. Mom started to sing, but no one joined in and she only sang one verse.

At church we had a missionary speaker. He talked about how churches in Africa made buildings out of sun-dried bricks, but they need money to buy roofs. He said $100 would put a roof on a church. The minister said, "Can't we all sacrifice to help these poor people?"

We looked at each other and smiled for the first time in a week. Mom reached into her purse and pulled out the envelope. She passed it to Darlene. Darlene gave it to me, and I handed it to Ocy. Ocy put it in the offering. When the offering was counted, the minister announced that it was a little over $100. The missionary was excited. He hadn't expected such a large offering from our small church. He said, "You must have some rich people in this church." Suddenly it struck us! We had given $87 of that "little over $100." We were the rich family in the church! Hadn't the missionary said so? From that day on I've never been poor again. I've always remembered how rich I am because I have Jesus.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is this church rich too?

That depends on how much each of us realizes and uses what we have in Christ.

Grace Baptist, Hebron BP, and IBC Dr. Rick Griffith

19 April 1998, 3 May 1998, 8 Aug 04 Message 1 of 2

NIV 30 Minutes

**What to Do?**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

**Topic:** Hope

**Subject:** Why thank God even for a struggling church?

**Complement:** Because God guarantees our ultimate success.

**Purpose:** The listeners will thank God that He guarantees IBC’s ultimate success.

# Introduction

Title

### Some of you know that this past month my wife Susan has been in the states helping her Mom put her 87-year-old Dad into a full care facility. Praise God, she returns Tuesday night! You can probably guess that one of our biggest struggles has been…

Susan

#### Food! Without ability to multiply loaves and fish and not accustomed to cooking for three big boys, I’ve made some interesting discoveries in our fridge. Some food had been kind of pushed to the back and you know the rest…

Food

#### I like to look at this positively, so I call these rotten foods “food in transition.” “I wonder what it will look like after transitioning two weeks… three weeks?”

#### What to do? Our rule is: If it’s green and not supposed to be green, throw it out!

### Throwing food out is easy enough, but what to do with a church in transition? Now that’s not so easy—you can’t just throw it out.

Black

### The church throughout the world today is also in transition. In most countries the church is plagued by problems in worship, doctrine, impurity, divisions, etc.

### In contrast to today’s church, we often think that the first century church was holy.

1st Cent.

#### Though worship underground, unbelievers said, “Look how they love one other!”

Cata-combs

#### Their care for each other caused the church to grow so fast that it reached throughout the Roman empire by the end of the first century!

#### Idol-makers even got jealous that the commitment and growth of the holy church to the point of death had caused people to turn from idols.

Martyr

### But was the first century church holier than ours today? Well, Paul had even more major problems than we do today with the church at Corinth. First Corinthians…

Really?

#### *Divorce*: In chapter 7 some Corinthians felt that since God was for Christian marriage, believing partners should divorce their unbelieving spouses to marry Christians. Others felt that the ideal Christian shouldn’t even marry at all.

\* Divorce

#### *Idolatry:* They ate in pagan banquets and worshipped demons (chs. 8–10).

\* Idolatry

#### *Gifts*: They got so thrilled with the idea of spiritual gifts that everyone wanted to show off their gifts at the same time—it was chaos (chs. 12–14)! And many in the church didn’t even believe in the resurrection (ch. 15).

\* Gifts

#### *Sexual immorality:* This church even thought it good for one of their members to go to bed with his stepmother. “Nice to be so free!” they said (ch. 5).

\* Incest

How?

### Intro. MPI: So how did Paul respond to God concerning the rotten Corinthian church?

# I. Paul thanked God for the rotten Corinthian church (1:1-9)!

MPI

[He actually praised God for the church at Corinth that was far from what God wanted.]

## He called them *set apart* for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

A.

### [Author]: Paul called himself an apostle. But what’s an apostle? (1)

Black

#### Apostles were set apart for God’s special purposes just like the Corinthians were.

#### The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out”—and Paul, like all the apostles, was sent out by Christ Himself—even to the extent of being the key church planter of the first century and the one who began the church at Corinth.

3MJ

(auto)

### [Recipients]: But who were the Corinthians and when did Paul write them? (2)

#### He wrote in AD 56 when Corinth was a large seaport city like Singapore.

Date

##### Over 80,000 people lived there—a large city of its day. [Blomberg, 19]

##### Corinth was Greece’s wealthiest city.

##### Corinth was also a major multicultural urban center—Jews, Greeks, Romans, and other nationalities lived together.

##### Multi-religious too. Temples for Asclepius, Greek god of healing—and sites to worship Isis, Egyptian goddess of seafarers along with her Greek counterpart Poseidon. Sounds somewhat like our Singapore Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist places of worship.

Black

##### Also, it was like our country in that it had plenty of food brought in the city by farmers—and Corinth was a hub for necessary services in the countryside.

##### It had a strategic location between two seas like Singapore does.

Map (auto)

###### Ships passing between the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean Sea used to sail 366 kilometers around the Corinthian Peninsula. Then a shortcut over the Isthmus of Corinth developed.

Isthmus

(auto)

###### This gave rise to a ship rolling business on this close-up view. Special crews rolled ships on logs for seven kilometers (and 100 meters up a hill!) across this isthmus. This gave sailors a few days “liberty” in nearby Corinth before joining their ship on the other side. Where did they go in Corinth? To the 1000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, adding to the already depraved state of the city.

Ruins

##### So Corinth was impressive but also a rotten city, morally speaking—so much so that “Corinthian girl” became slang for a loose woman in Roman times.

Aphrodite

#### But what about the *Church* at Corinth?

Black

##### This group of believers had come to know the Lord during Paul’s 18-month stay in Corinth in AD 51-52.

##### Now, 4 years later, Paul writes to these still relatively new believers.

##### Like most churches, this church had become like the culture of its day.

Describe

##### With this background, notice Paul’s two ways to describe them in verse 2:

###### First, he says they were sanctified.

* Sanct

What’s “sanctified” mean? It means “set apart”!

It means that God already determined their position—reserved or set apart to serve God. Past tense! God already considered them *holy.*

###### Second, they were called by God to be holy in their day-to-day living.

* Sanct
* holy

If they were *already* holy, why say they were *called* to be holy?

This means the church was to make their position their practice.

### Also notice the dual greeting of grace and peace in verse 3.

Black

#### “Grace” is the typical Greek and Roman greeting—but it reminds the church of the free gift of salvation in Christ.

#### “Peace” is the typical Jewish salutation—meaning wholeness in all aspects of life.

(Now let’s be honest here. If you were writing to a rotten church, would you call them “set apart” and “holy”? Not me! Equally amazing are verses 4-9 which show Paul thanking God for these guys! Why did he give thanks?)

## Paul thanked God that the Corinthian believers would eventually be perfect (1:4-9).

B.

### Paul thanked God that God gave many benefits to the Corinthian church (1:4-7).

#### For one, God gave them His grace (4).

##### What’s grace? Grace is God *giving* us what we *don’t* deserve. Mercy is God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve.

Black

##### John Newton said, “When I get to heaven I will see three wonders there. The first wonder will be to *see* many people whom I didn’t expect to see. The second wonder will be to *miss* many people whom I did expect to see, and the third and greatest wonder of all, will be to find *myself* there.” Tan 2095

#### But God gave them every spiritual gift they needed (5-7).

##### The abilities related to speaking and knowledge probably refer to gifts of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues—perhaps teaching too.

##### Does verse 7 mean all the gifts will last until the return of Christ? That’s how some interpret it. But I’m not so sure. It is present tense so it has more of the idea that at the time of writing the church was blessed with every spiritual gift. It needed no more than it already had.

(But how could Paul be so positive about a church just filled with divisions and flagrant abuses of even God’s gifts? Verses 8-9 supply the answer…)

### God Himself would assure that the Corinthians eventually become perfect (1:8-9).

#### I have some questions about verse 8:

##### What does it mean that God would keep them “strong to the end”?

##### Does this mean every Christian will persevere in his faith—especially since this church was hardly spiritually strong when Paul wrote?

##### What about people who fall away?

#### These are very big questions that deserve much greater treatment than I can give today, but here are at least some preliminary answers.

##### Salvation is by faith in Christ—not works before or after salvation.

##### To some extent every Christian has fallen away, haven’t we?

###### If there’s anyone here who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone! When we talk about backslidden Christians, in reality we’re talking about us all, since none of us has totally lived up to God’s demands.

###### So the issue of backsliding is not one of *“who* has done it?” but *“how much* has each of us done it?”

###### It’s not an issue of *person* but of *degree*!

##### If salvation was based on continued obedience, of all churches, the church at Corinth would be the one that wouldn’t make it. Yet, ironically, some of the clearest texts in the NT supporting the once-saved-always-saved view are in this letter! This letter—to the most carnal church in the NT!

###### They are assured that they would one day be blameless in this verse.

###### In 5:5 Paul said to discipline a man in the church who was going to bed with his step-mother “so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord”! Now you don’t get much farther backslidden than public sin that the whole church knew about and bragged about according to 5:2! Yet even this man is assured salvation!

###### Also, 6:2-3 says that all the believers to some extent would judge angels.

###### And 12:13 notes that every one of them was baptised into the body of Christ. Can we or they get spiritually unbaptised?!

###### Chapter 15 assures them that they all will be resurrected.

###### The idea that their salvation would be complete just permeates this letter.

(But I can hear some of you thinking, “How can this be? How can this guy say that everyone who genuinely trusts Christ will be saved?” The answer is actually throughout this entire introduction to the letter—simply that…)

#### God guarantees our salvation.

Guarantees

##### Now note that I’m talking about those who are *really* saved—not just any of us who *says* he is saved but has no evidence in his life. The Corinthian church had its problems, but there still was some evidence of life there!

##### And this life is from God—the reason we are saved is not because of us—it’s because of God!

Text

##### Did you notice the great emphasis on God and Christ in this passage?

###### This week I counted how many times “Lord,” “Jesus” and “Christ” and pronouns are noted in these nine verses. It’s 26 times in nine verses!

###### And words for God are mentioned another 8 times! See the blue.

###### That’s 34 times the first two members of the Trinity are noted here. Do you think God was trying to tell the church something through Paul?

###### Paul is starting his letter with a clear emphasis that, even though this was a rotten church, God would guarantee its ultimate success!

Black

(And isn’t He trying to tell us the same thing? Now some here may have already made the assumption that I think this is a rotten church. No, not at all. But even if we were, we also should give thanks—even if we did have a rotten church. Why? We should…)

# II. Thank God for IBC because God Himself guarantees our ultimate success (MI)!

MI

[Show gratitude to God because, no matter our struggles, He assures our final salvation.]

## We should thank God that He has set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

### Never in the NT are believers ever called sinners—we’re called saints!

### God has a unique role for us to play in this society—and that excites me!

## We also should thank God that He promises us the same blamelessness in the future as will be true of the Corinthians (1:8-9).

### Is IBC everything that God wants it to be? No—but God says that we will be!

### Dr. Michael Shen, principal of Singapore Bible College, once saw his daughter Anna reading the famous book by Paul Bunyon called *Pilgrim’s Progress.* He noticed that she was about a fourth the way through the book. An hour later as he passed her he saw she was at the end. “Wah, how incredible my daughter is,” he thought. “So clever that she reads so fast.” When he asked her about it, she smiled and said, “The story is so exciting it made me nervous—whether Christian will be able to survive to the end or not—so I jumped to the end first, to see whether he is still alive or not.”

Black

### Verse 9 says, “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” Faithful to do what? To present us blameless before Him!

### God has enabled us to see the end of the story now!

(I don’t know about you, but for me, this causes me to…)

# Conclusion

MI again

### Thank God for IBC because God Himself guarantees our ultimate success (M.I.).

### Are we a church in transition? Sure. But what church isn’t?

### Are we a church that still has a way to go to be called holy? Yes again. But God is the one who promises to lead us to perfection.

### So how should we respond?

What to do

#### Be holy (1:2).

\* holy

##### Put away any sin that hinders your walk with God—not because if you don’t you’ll lose your salvation—but so that God won’t have to do such a major overhaul on you when you get to heaven!

##### Can you think of a sin that God has recently given you victory over? Are you growing in holiness?

#### Be thankful (1:4).

\* thank

##### Thank Him right now that His plan for this church will ultimately succeed—for God never called anyone to a task in which he ultimately failed.

##### When was the last time you thanked God for this church?

\* serve

#### Be serving (1:7).

##### This church also has all the gifts that we need—but we must put them to use.

##### If someone asked you what your unique role is at IBC, what would you say?

\* humble

#### Be humble—the whole passage emphasizes God’s work, not ours.

Black

Grace Baptist Church & Hebron BP Church Dr. Rick Griffith

19 April 1998 & 3 May 1998 Single Message

NIV 40 Minutes

**What to Do With a Rotten Church**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

**Topic:** Hope

**Subject:** Why thank God even for a rotten church?

**Complement:** Because God guarantees our ultimate success.

**Purpose:** The listeners will thank God that He guarantees GBC’s ultimate success.

# Introduction

### Last week I began with, “Dad, is Easter a chicken?” Today’s chicken question: What to do with a rotten chicken? (Lately I’m preaching of chicken or chicken of preaching!)

#### This week I discovered lurking in our fridge some chicken that Susan had made a few weeks ago. It had been kind of pushed to the back and you know the rest…

#### We’ve begun to call these rotten foods “experiments.” “I wonder what it will look like after two weeks… three weeks?”

#### What to do? Our rule is: If it’s green and not supposed to be green, throw it out!

### That’s easy enough, but what to do with a rotten church? Now that’s not so easy—you can’t just throw it out.

### In certain ways the church today is somewhat rotten. In most countries the church is plagued by problems in worship, doctrine, impurity, divisions, etc.

### In contrast to today’s church, we often think that the first century church was holy.

#### Even the unbelievers said of them, “Look how much they love each other!”

#### Their care for each other caused the church to grow so fast that it reached throughout the Roman empire by the end of the first century!

#### Acts 19 records how the idol-makers got jealous that the growth of the holy church had caused people to turn from idols.

### But was the first century church holier than ours today? Well, Paul had even more major problems than we do today with the church at Corinth. First Corinthians…

#### *Marriage and divorce*: In chapter 7 some Corinthians felt that since God was for Christian marriage, believing partners should divorce their unbelieving spouses to marry Christians. Others felt that the ideal Christian shouldn’t even marry at all.

#### *Idol feasts:* They ate in pagan banquets and worshipped demons (chs. 8–10).

#### *Christian doctrine*: They got so thrilled with the idea of spiritual gifts that everyone wanted to show off their gifts at the same time—it was chaos (chs. 12–14)! And many in the church didn’t even believe in the resurrection (ch. 15).

#### *Sexual immorality:* This church even thought it was great to have one of their members going to bed with his stepmother. “Nice to be so free!” they said (ch. 5).

### Intro. MPI: So how did Paul respond to God concerning the rotten Corinthian church?

# I. Paul thanked God for the rotten Corinthian church (1:1-9)!

[This apostle actually praised God for the church at Corinth that was far from what God wanted.]

## He called these people *set apart* for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

### [Author]: Paul called himself an apostle. But what’s an apostle? (1)

#### An apostle was set apart for God’s special purposes just like the Corinthians were.

#### The word “apostle” literally means “one sent out”—and Paul, like all the apostles, was sent out by Christ Himself—even to the extent of being the key church planter of the first century and the one who began the church at Corinth.

### [Recipients]: But who was the letter written to? (2)

#### Corinth was a large seaport city similar to modern Singapore [Blomberg, 19].

##### Over 80,000 people lived there—a large city of its day.

##### In Paul’s day it was the wealthiest city in Greece.

##### Corinth was also a major multicultural urban center—Jews, Greeks, Romans, and other nationalities lived together.

##### Multi-religious too. Temples for Asclepius, Greek god of healing—and sites to worship Isis, Egyptian goddess of seafarers along with her Greek counterpart Poseidon. Sounds somewhat like our Singapore Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist places of worship.

##### Also, it was like our country in that it had plenty of food brought in the city by farmers—and Corinth was a hub for necessary services in the countryside.

##### It had a strategic location like Singapore does.

###### [NTS, 142 overhead]: Ships passing between the Aegean Sea on the right to the Adriatic Sea on the left saved 366 kilometers by passing over the Isthmus of Corinth rather than sailing around the Corinthian Peninsula.

###### [NTS, 160a overhead]: This gave rise to a ship rolling business on this close-up view. Special crews rolled ships on logs for seven kilometers (and 100 meters up a hill!) to or from the Corinthian Gulf. This gave sailors a few days in nearby Corinth—and where did they go in Corinth? They supported the 1000 prostitutes in the temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love, adding to the already depraved state of the city. But why didn’t they simply use the canal above? The canal wasn’t built until 1880-1893!

##### Corinth was impressive but also a rotten city, morally speaking—so much so that “Corinthian girl” became slang for a loose woman in Roman times.

#### What about the Church of Corinth?

##### This group of believers had come to know the Lord during Paul’s 18 month stay in Corinth in AD 51-52.

##### Now, 4 years later, Paul writes to these still relatively new believers.

##### As with most churches, this church had become like the culture of its day.

##### With this background, notice Paul’s two ways to describe them in verse 2:

###### First, he says they were sanctified.

What’s that mean? It means “set apart”!

It means that God already determined their position—reserved or set apart to serve God. Past tense! God already considered them *holy.*

###### Second, they were called by God to be holy.

If they are already holy, why say they were called to be holy?

I think it means the church was to make their position their practice.

### Also notice the dual greeting of grace and peace in verse 3.

#### “Grace” is the typical Greek and Roman greeting—but it reminds the church of the free gift of salvation in Christ.

#### “Peace” is the typical Jewish salutation. It means wholeness in every aspect of life.

(Now let’s be honest here. If you knew that you were writing to a rotten church, would you call them “set apart” and “holy”? Not me! Equally amazing is verses 4-9 which show Paul thanking God for these guys! Why did he give thanks?)

## [He gave thanks because they had many benefits and would eventually be perfect (1:4-9).]

### Paul thanked God that God gave many benefits to the Corinthian church (1:4-7).

#### For one, God gave them His grace (4).

##### What’s grace? Grace is God *giving* us what we *don’t* deserve. Mercy is God *not* giving us what we *do* deserve.

##### John Newton once said, “When I get to heaven I will see three wonders there. The first wonder will be to *see* many people whom I didn’t expect to see. The second wonder will be to *miss* many people whom I did expect to see, and the third and greatest wonder of all, will be to find *myself* there.” Tan 2095

##### I used to be a timid little boy with a terrible fear of being in front of groups. The first time I tried to speak in class to give a book report I about died. I always felt insignificant and ashamed, being from a home where my parents had twelve divorces between them and the people they married! But God reached down in His grace and saved me, an unlikely candidate. The Corinthians were unlikely prospects for salvation too—like me and you too.

#### But God gave them every spiritual gift they needed (5-7).

##### The abilities related to speaking and knowledge probably refer to gifts of word of knowledge, word of wisdom, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues—perhaps teaching too.

##### Does verse 7 mean all the gifts will last until the return of Christ? That’s how some interpret it. But I’m not so convinced that this is exactly what it says. It is present tense so it has more of the idea that at the time of writing the church was blessed with every spiritual gift. It needed no more than it already had.

(But how could Paul be so positive about a church just filled with divisions and flagrant abuses of even God’s gifts? Verses 8-9 supply the answer…)

### God Himself would assure that the Corinthians eventually become perfect (1:8-9).

#### I have some questions about verse 8:

##### What does it mean that God would keep them “strong to the end”?

##### Does this mean every Christian will persevere in his faith?

##### Was this church spiritually strong even when Paul wrote?

##### What about people who fall away?

#### These are very big questions that deserve much greater treatment than I can give today, but here’s at least some preliminary answers.

##### Salvation is by faith in Christ—not works before or after salvation.

##### To some extent every Christian has fallen away, haven’t we?

###### If there’s anyone here who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone! When we talk about backslidden Christians, in reality we’re talking about us all, since none of us has totally lived up to God’s demands.

###### So the issue of backsliding is not one of *“who* has done it?” but *“how much* has each of us done it?”

###### It’s not an issue of *person* but of *degree*!

##### If salvation was based on continued obedience, of all churches, the church at Corinth would be the one that wouldn’t make it. Yet, ironically, some of the clearest texts in the NT supporting the once-saved-always-saved view are in this letter! This letter—to the most carnal church in the NT!

###### They are assured that they would one day be blameless in this verse.

###### In 5:5 Paul said to discipline a man in the church who was going to bed with his step-mother “so that his sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord”! Now you don’t get much farther backslidden than public sin that the whole church knew about and bragged about according to 5:2! Yet even this man is assured salvation!

###### Also, 6:2-3 says that all the believers to some extent would judge angels.

###### And 12:13 notes that every one of them was baptised into the body of Christ. Can we or they get spiritually unbaptised?!

###### Chapter 15 assures them that they all will be resurrected.

###### The idea that their salvation would be complete just permeates this letter.

(But I can hear some of you thinking, “How can this be? How can this guy say that everyone who genuinely trusts Christ will be saved?” The answer is actually throughout this entire introduction to the letter—simply that…)

#### God guarantees our salvation.

##### Now note that I’m talking about those who are *really* saved—not just any of us who *says* he is saved but has no evidence in his life. The Corinthian church had its problems, but there still was some evidence of life there!

##### And this life is from God—the reason we are saved is not because of us—it’s because of God!

##### Did you notice the great emphasis on God and Christ in this passage?

###### This week I counted how many times “Jesus” and “Christ” and pronouns are noted in these nine verses. It’s 26 times in 9 verses!

###### And God is mentioned another 7 times!

###### That’s 33 times the first two members of the Trinity are noted here. Do you think God was trying to tell the church something through Paul?

###### Paul is starting his letter with a clear emphasis that, even though this was a rotten church, God would guarantee its ultimate success!

(And isn’t He trying to tell us the same thing? Now some here may have already made the assumption that I think this is a rotten church. No, not at all. But even if we were, we also should give thanks even if we do have a rotten church. Why? We should…)

# II. Thank God for Grace Baptist because God guarantees our ultimate success (MI).

[Our hearts should overflow with gratitude to God because, no matter what our struggles, He Himself guarantees our final salvation.]

## We also should thank God that He has set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

### Never in the NT are believers ever called sinners—we’re called saints!

### God has a unique role for us to play in this society—and that excites me!

## We also should thank God that He promises us the same blamelessness in the future as will be true of the Corinthians (1:8-9).

### Is Grace Baptist everything that God wants it to be? No—but God says that we will be!

### Rev. Michael Shen, principal of Singapore Bible College, once saw his daughter Anna reading the famous book by Paul Bunyon called *Pilgrim’s Progress.* He noticed that she was about a fourth the way through the book. An hour later as he passed her he saw she was at the end. “Wah, how incredible my daughter is,” he thought. “So clever that she reads so fast.” When he asked her about it, she smiled and said, “The story is so exciting it made me nervous—whether Christian will be able to survive to the end or not—so I jumped to the end first, to see whether he is still alive or not.”

### Verse 9 says, “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” Faithful to do what? To present us blameless before Him!

### God has enabled us to see the end of the story now!

(I don’t know about you, but for me, this causes me to…)

# Conclusion

### Thank God for Grace Baptist because God guarantees our ultimate success (M.I.).

### Are we a church in transition? Sure. But what church isn’t?

### Are we a church that still has a way to go to be called holy? Yes again. But God is the one who promises to lead us to perfection.

### I couldn’t invent a more encouraging thing to say to you this morning—God has already said in His Word that He guarantees our ultimate success!

### So how should we respond?

#### Be holy (1:2).

##### Put away any sin that hinders your walk with God—not because if you don’t you’ll lose your salvation—but so that God won’t have to do such a major overhaul on you when you get to heaven!

##### Can you think of a sin that God has recently given you victory over? Are you growing in holiness?

#### Be thankful (1:4).

##### Thank Him right now that He has a plan for this church that will ultimately succeed—for God never called anyone to a task in which he ultimately failed.

##### When was the last time you thanked God for this church?

#### Be serving (1:7).

##### This church also has all the gifts that we need—but we must put them to use.

##### If someone asked you what your unique contribution to GBC is, what would you say?

#### Be humble—the whole passage emphasizes God’s work, not ours.

**Preliminary Questions**

**Verses Questions**

Context What did the author record just prior to this passage?

Purpose Why is this passage in the Bible?

Background What historical context helps us understand this passage?

1 What is an apostle?  
Why does Paul mention his apostleship?  
Who was Sosthenes?

2 What do we know about the church at Corinth?  
Why does Paul call this carnal church sanctified?  
Is there a contradiction between being sanctified and called to be holy?

3 What’s the significance of grace and peace?

4 Does Paul give thanks for them or for what God has done?

5 What does Paul mean by them being enriched in speaking and knowledge?

6 How does Paul’s testimony relate?

7 Does this mean all the gifts will last until the return of Christ?

8 Is being kept strong to the end the same as perseverance?  
Was the church even spiritually strong even when Paul wrote?  
What about people who fall away?

9 God is faithful to do what?

**Tentative Subject/Complement Statements**

Text

**Possible Illustrations**

Background to Corinth

* Route of second missionary journey
* Map of isthmus

Believers are always called saints (who sin)—not sinners (Neil Anderson)

Not used (too negative):

### In certain ways the church today is somewhat rotten. In most countries the church is plagued by problems in worship, doctrine, impurity, etc.

#### *Marriage and divorce*: How should the church respond to those who have been divorced and remarried? Should these men be allowed to be deacons?

#### *Buddhist feasts:* How should we balance filial piety with ancestor worship?

#### *Worship*: Too often our worship has degenerated into ritualism or else had uncontrolled excesses. And we still deal with debated issues such as should women lead in prayer in services?

#### *Christian doctrine*: Should we encourage speaking in tongues—after all, it is scriptural! What about prophecy, what about even holy laughter (speaking of chickens!)?

#### *Sexual immorality:* Just last month I heard of the fall of another pastor—this time it was Darrell, one of my seminary buddies who has had four kids but divorced his wife to run off with another woman.

Not the point I wanted to make:

### A ship once cruised along a coast when a terrible storm suddenly came upon it, tossing it to and fro. The captain saw that the storm was driving the ship towards some huge rocks near the shore, so he tried many ways to get out to sea—to no avail. Finally he ordered the anchor to be cast—but the anchor simply dragged along the seabed as the wind drove the ship towards the rocks. Then the boat jolted as the anchor grabbed ahold of a huge rock at the bottom of the sea. Though the strong winds continued to rage, the ship remained secure. HOPE secure like an anchor

**What to Do With a Rotten Church**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:* The reason Paul thanks God for the church being set apart for God is because he knows that they will achieve ultimate sanctification.**

# I. Salutation: The way Paul refers to the church in his opening statements is as *people set apart* for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

# II. Thanksgiving: The reason Paul thanks God for the church is because God assures that *they will achieve ultimate sanctification* (1:4-9).

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Thanksgiving is not natural for us even in good situations (examples).

### Thanksgiving is even more unnatural in bad situations (examples).

### But God says to be thankful in all situations (explain).

### Subject: But why give thanks for a rotten church?

# I. Paul thanked God for the rotten Corinthian church (1:1-9).

## He called these people *set apart* for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

## He gave thanks because they would *achieve ultimate sanctification* (1:4-9).

# II. Thank God for Grace Baptist because God guarantees our ultimate success (MI).

## No matter what our problems are, God promises us the same blamelessness in the future as will be true of the Corinthians in 1:8-9.

# Conclusion

### Thank God for Grace Baptist because God guarantees our ultimate success (M.I.).

Discussion Questions:

**Summary of 1 Corinthians 1–4**

Following the proem, or salutation (1:1-3), and the thanksgiving for

God's enriching work in the believers of the Corinthian church (1:4-9),

Paul begins the first main division of the epistle (1:10-4:21), which deals

with the church's profound internal divisions and fundamental

misapprehensions as to the nature of Christian leadership.

On the basis of reports brought to Paul by "some from Chloe's household" (1:11),

Paul has learned of the party spirit by which various sectors of the church

identified themselves with particular leaders, apparently boasting of the

superior wisdom of their self-identification in each case (1:10-17). Paul

despises such so-called wisdom: its categories are inimical to all that

Paul holds dear--so much so that if its categories were to prevail, the

gospel itself could be dismissed as God's folly (1:18-25), to become a

Christian would mean to become a fool (1:26-), and to preach the gospel

without manipulative and self-promoting eloquence but with simple

dependence on the truthfulness and power of the message of the crucified

Messiah would be the essence of ignorance (2:1-5). Conversely, if God's

folly is wiser than the world's wisdom, if Christians rejoice that God has

chosen the "foolish" in order to shame the "wise" and to make it clear that

Christ alone is our "wisdom from God," if Paul's priorities in preaching

are foundational, then the Corinthians' pursuit of the world's wisdom

implicitly contradicts their own Christian profession.

This does not mean that there is no sense in which the Christian gospel

is wise. Far from it: God's wisdom is revealed by the Spirit (2:6-16).

But Paul could not address the Corinthian believers as if they were in fact

spiritual, because they were not living up to their calling: they were

still divided along party lines associated with well-known leaders (3:1-4)

and were thus, at best, "infants." So Paul must clarify the nature of

Christian leadership. In the rest of this chapter, he removes false

impressions in this regard, first by two metaphors--one agricultural

(3:5-9a) and one drawn from the construction industry (3:9b-15)--in order

to stress the complementary nature of the leader's work and their

accountability to God for its quality. That leads to a warning against all

who destroy the church (3:16-17). Returning to the contrast between wisdom

and folly, Paul directly assaults any remaining misconceptions about

Christian leadership: the Corinthians are deceiving themselves if they

think their partisan spirit is a mark of wisdom, when the Scriptures

promote humility and when genuine Christian maturity recognizes that in

Christ all Christian leaders--and everything else--have become part of

the Christians' inheritance (3:18-23). Paul concludes by showing that

Christian leaders and those who follow them must alike recognize that God

alone is the One who makes the distinctions, and he alone rightly assesses

performance (4:1-7). Indeed, the Corinthians should learn this lesson by

the simple contrast between their own self-vaunting pretensions and the way

the apostles are treated as the scum of the earth (4:8-11). They should

learn to imitate the Christian conduct of their own father in Christ, the

apostle Paul himself, and thus align themselves with what is normative in

other churches (4:14-17). The prospect of Paul's impending visit

constitutes both a final appeal and a scarcely veiled threat (4:18-21).

[D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris, "An Introduction To The New

Testament"]

**Outline of 1 Corinthians**

**I. (Chs. 1—4) Paul answers Chloe's report of divisions with the absurdity of exalting favorite teachers since their message is Christ crucified and minister simply as Christ's humble servants to convince the church to humble itself.**

A. (1:1-9) Paul's introduction affirms his apostolic authority and thanks God for the Corinthians' giftedness in order to begin his stern epistle on a positive note.

B. (1:10-17) Paul states that Chloe's household has informed him of divisions in the church whereby competing factions have rallied around their favorite teachers: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and "Christ" to let them know this is contrary to what he taught them.

C. (1:18—4:21) Paul states that their divisions stem from misunderstanding the true gospel message and the motives and self-abasement of God's ministers to reveal the remedy for their problem with pride.

1. (1:18—3:4) A misunderstanding of the gospel *message* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to see that the gospel message of Christ crucified is the true wisdom of God, in contrast to the human “wisdom” which caused their divisions.

a. (1:18–2:5) Since the gospel is not human wisdom but Christ crucified, the church shouldn’t boast of competing “versions of wisdom.”

b. (2:6–3:4) Since the gospel is wisdom from the Spirit, the church shouldn’t divide into groups following different leaders.

2. (3:5—4:5) A misunderstanding of the gospel *ministers* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to see that these messengers are only servants of God, not leaders rallying for followers and personal fame.

a. (3:5-17) Gospel messengers are fellow workers with God who will be evaluated based on their works for Him.

b. (3:18–4:5) Gospel messengers are accountable to God ultimately (not to men).

3. (4:6-21) A misunderstanding of their *own pride* has resulted in divisions because of a failure to imitate Paul's self-abasement for the cause of Christ.

**II. (Chs. 5—6) Paul answers the report of disorders in immorality and lawsuits to enable the Corinthian believers to realize that God has given them ability to make wise decisions to exercise church discipline.**

A. (Ch. 5) The church should discipline a man involved in open promiscuity with his own stepmother because his immorality has polluted the entire body to the extent that the church is proud of its "liberality."

B. (6:1-11) Disputing believers should prefer to be wronged without retaliation rather than take fellow Christians to pagan law courts because the Corinthians fail to see their spiritual competence to judge disputes within the church.

C. (6:12-20) The Corinthians should stop committing immorality with prostitutes because fornication is completely at odds with their relationship to the Triune God, who gives the body value.

CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

21 January 2007 Message 1 of 24

**Why Say, “Yea”?**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

Simple inductive form

# Introduction

### We’re supposed to be thankful in all situations (1 Thess. 5:17), but…

#### Giving thanks is not natural for us even in good situations.

#### Giving thanks is even harder during struggling times.

### Question: Why did Paul give thanks even for the struggling Corinthian church?

# I. Paul thanked God for this struggling church because he focused not on who they appeared to be, but on who they really were (1:1-9).

## Past: Paul called themset apart for God’s special purposes (1:1-3).

## Present: Paul thanked God for the blessings they already enjoyed (1:4-7).

## Future: God Himself assures that they would eventually become perfect (1:8-9).

# II. Thank God for who we really are and will be (Main Idea).

## Thank God that He has set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

## Thank God for the same blessings that we enjoy (cf. 1:4-7).

## Thank God that we will be as blameless as the Corinthians (1:8-9).

# Conclusion

### Why say, “Yeah”? Thank God for who we really are and will be (Main Idea).

### So how should you respond?

Thought Questions:

* Would the people who know you best say you exude a thankful spirit? Why or why not?
* Why do we often focus on our struggles rather than God’s goodness to us?
* What tips for a thankful heart do you personally find most helpful?

CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

21 January 2007 Message 1 of 24

**Why Say, “Yea”?**

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## Future: God Himself assures that they would eventually become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perfect (1:8-9).

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CIC Dr. Rick Griffith

21 January 2007 Message 1 of 24

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Simple inductive form

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# Conclusion

### Thank God for CIC because God Himself guarantees our ultimate success (Main Idea)!

### So how should you respond?

Thought Questions:

* Would the people who know you best say you exude a thankful spirit? Why or why not?
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* What tips for a thankful heart do you personally find most helpful?

 **Rick Griffith**

2 September 2012

*Message 1 of 24*

**What to Do?**

***1 Corinthians 1:1-9***

# Introduction

### We’re supposed to be thankful in all situations (1 Thess. 5:18), but…

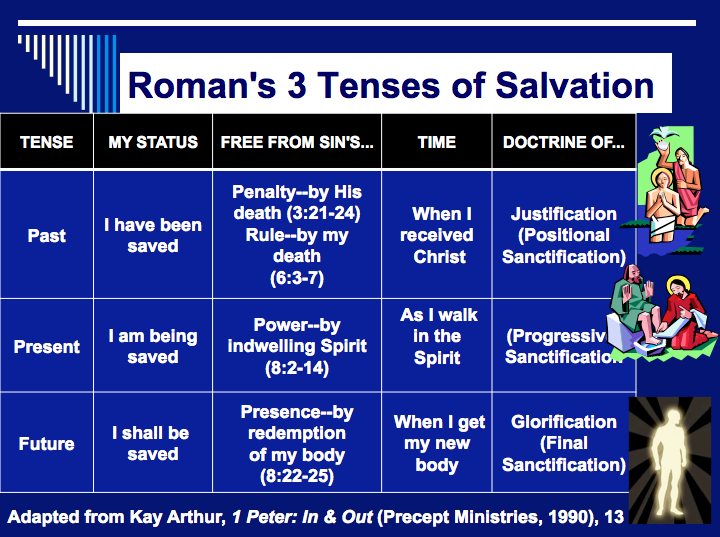
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## Future: God Himself assures that they would eventually become \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ perfect (1:8-9).

# II. Thank God for who we really \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be !

## A. Thank God that He has \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ set us apart for a special purpose (cf. 1:2).

## B. Thank God for the same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blessings that we enjoy now (cf. 1:4-7).

## C. Thank God that we will be as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ blameless as the Corinthians (1:8-9).

# Conclusion

### Why thank God even for a struggling church? Because God Himself guarantees our ultimate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be (Main Idea)!

### So how should you respond?

Thought Questions:

1. Would the people who know you best say you show a thankful spirit? Why or why not?
2. Why do we often focus on our struggles rather than God’s goodness to us?
3. What tips for a thankful heart do you personally find most helpful?