

I want you to imagine that you are on a trip this morning. You are traveling and have come to a large city. You check into your hotel and decide to take a walk around to see what you can find. You notice that this is a city with a lot of businesses. Lots of movements as people go from one place to another. This city is booming economically—lots of products are coming in and out. You walk around and see people from all different places and all kinds of walks of life.

Then at the end of the street you look up and at the top of a hill, you see a huge building. You ask someone what is that building and they tell you that it's a temple to the local god. You find out that their religion is very immoral to the point that prostitution is considered an act of worship. You find out that the whole city is very depraved, that drunkenness and dishonesty are standard ways of life.

But then you hear that there is a church in this city. A gathering of Christians that believes the same as you. It's a brand new church and they're struggling. They invite you to come and visit, and so you do.

While you are there someone burst in and holds up a letter from the pastor who founded the congregation. Everyone settles down and one of the leaders starts to read. **Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, <sup>2</sup> To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: <sup>3</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. <sup>5</sup> For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— <sup>6</sup> because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. <sup>7</sup> Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. <sup>8</sup> He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.**

I want you to imagine that you are one of those people that heard those words read for the first time because in many ways, you are just like those Christians that lived in Corinth. Paul wrote those words not just for them but also to encourage you. These words get down to the heart of what it means that JESUS CHRIST IS REVEALED TO HIS PEOPLE. And they show that Christianity is the best way of life because it answers three questions that plague every soul. Who am I? Why am I here? And where am I going?

Paul addresses his letter to you, **to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy**. The word sanctified means to be set apart as holy. Doesn't that sound strange that Paul would say that about these people? How could that be? They had all kinds of problems. The sins that touched their city also touched them. How in the world can Paul call these people holy?

Because that is what they are. Every Christian is holy and blameless in the eyes of God. When God looks at you, he says, "You are holy!" Do you think you are holy? Raise your right hand if you didn't make any mistake this past week. Who here in the last seven days didn't sin once? Never was selfish, never lusted, never said a bad or hateful word. Never even had a bad thought even for a second. Could anyone honestly make that claim?

Yet here God's Word calls you holy and blameless. He sees every mistake we make. He knows your thought and even every word that you mutter. And it's sad how much sin he has to see. God knows that we aren't holy. He knows that because we are the way we are, we deserve to be punished and condemned forever.

But still God tells us we are holy. It's because of Jesus Christ. He made us holy. He came into the world and was revealed to his people. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God placed his fateful hand on Jesus to make him the sin-bearer. He put all sin upon himself and allowed God to punish him. That's why he died on the cross to take our sins away and to make us holy.

Therefore when you ask the question you are able to say, “I am holy. I have been sanctified in Christ Jesus who took away all my sins.” Even though our lives at times feel like they are all stained with sin and guilt and our pasts haunt us. Even if we feel like we have permanently ruined our lives, it’s not true. Because of Christ, God forgives you. You are holy and blameless.

Paul goes on in his letter, **I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.** <sup>5</sup> **For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge.** That answers that second question of “why am I here?” That lets you know that as we listen and grow in faith, we lack nothing.

Sometimes churches and their members struggle with low self-esteem. They will focus on what they don’t have or look at what other places have and think it is so much better over there. Poor us! We have nothing! But the Word of God says, **“you do not lack any spiritual gift.”** Sure we may not have a brand new church or a huge school. We may desire to see improvements and changes but those are all little things. We have the big things, the important things. And we don’t lack any spiritual gifts. As a member of St. John’s, you have been enriched in every way, in all your speaking and knowledge. Look at the people around you—they seem like regular, ordinary people. But this morning, God tells you that you are not just a peg filling a hole or a body to sit in a pew. Spiritually you are a very rich group of people. God gives you everything you need to grow and mature in your faith.

God has placed you here because you have a set of gifts that is unique to you. And do you realize that if you don’t use your gifts it actually means that we as a whole group aren’t nearly as strong as a church? God has brought us all together in this body of the church to serve him with the gifts he has given to us. No two people have the same gifts and no other person has the gifts that you have. That means if you aren’t using those gifts it’s like trying to do your daily tasks without the use of a key part of your body. The tasks might still get done but not as well as if you used your gifts. The tasks might get done but it might take a lot more effort from other parts.

As a Christian God has placed you here to use those gifts he has given to you. He has called you to be active and ready to serve to help others, to take ownership in your church, and to take pride in what God allows our church to do as it proclaims God's Word, as it gathers together in study and fellowship to grow, and as it reaches out.

Because God also answers the question, Where am I going? Do you realize how unusual this answer is? I don't care who you are, no one knows what's going to happen in the future. Think about your money situation – what will it be like when you retire? You have no clue. You're trying to be careful with your money now, which is good. People who worked careful to save and invest and then out of the blue they're all gone. Think about your health. You can lead the healthiest lifestyle in the world – exercise, watch your diet. And that's good! But how many times do you hear about people who suddenly become ill, maybe even drop over dead, for no apparent reason.

The point I'm trying to make is, it is impossible to predict the future – what will happen to your health, what will happen to your portfolio. But as a Christian, you can be certain about one thing - what will happen to your soul. Verse 8 tells us: **You will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** When you die, or when Jesus returns, and you stand before God, God will look into your heart, and he will see that all of your sins have been washed away by the Lamb of God. He will see that you believe in Jesus as your Savior. He will call you blameless, and welcome you into heaven. You can be sure, without a doubt, that this is what will happen to your soul. That's why being a Christian is the best kind of life there is. There's certainty there about the future. **He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.** <sup>9</sup> **God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.**

8 times the answer to all three of the questions appears in this lesson. 8 times Jesus & Christ appear next to each other in this lesson. The answer to your questions about life is JESUS CHRIST. Even in the sin corrupted world, even in the filthy time in which we live. In him you're better than you were to serve richly with the gifts you have been given as your head toward the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.