

1 CORINTHIANS: MOVING FROM THE CARNAL TO THE SPIRITUAL STATE

Part II: Focusing On God's Encouraging Experiential Evidences Of His Work In Us

(1 Corinthians 1:4-9)

I. Introduction

- A. Functioning by means of the sin nature, what we term "carnality," is an ongoing challenge in today's churches.
- B. Paul's 1 Corinthians epistle was directed to carnal believers (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3), but 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 on God's experiential evidences of His work in such believers offers encouragement for overcoming carnality:

II. Focusing On God's Encouraging Experiential Evidences Of His Work In Us, 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

- A. Paul expressed repeat thanksgivings to God for the grace of God that had been given to his Corinthian readers by their salvation in Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:4.
- B. Specifically, Paul alluded to the experiential evidences of that grace in the enriching Paul's readers enjoyed in terms of all spiritual speaking gifts and knowledge that testified of their true salvation in Christ, 1 Cor. 1:5-6.
- C. Indeed, so profuse was God's provisions of spiritual gifts that the Church at Corinth "lacked" (*hustereo*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 856-857) in "no" (*meden*, Ibid., p. 519-520) spiritual "gift" (*charisma*, Ibid., p. 887), 1 Corinthians 1:7a.
- D. This was an amazing statement for Paul to make, an amazing note of appreciation, for the Corinthian believers were very badly misusing these spiritual gifts in immaturity and carnality (as follows):
 - 1. In 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, we note how the Corinthian believers were using their gifts in a prideful manner trying to outdo one another in ministry when they should have humbly accepted the part that every gifted believer necessarily had in the local body for the mutual benefit of the whole Church.
 - 2. In fact, Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 eloquently taught the supremacy of exercising selfless love over the use of spiritual gifts since spiritual gifts were destined to pass away in the eternal state anyway where love would be with us forever, cf. 1 Corinthians 13:11-13.
 - 3. Then, in 1 Corinthians 14:1-25, Paul revealed that the Corinthian believers with the gift of tongues were boastfully speaking in the Church in a language others could not understand, and that without any interpreters, what does not edify unless an interpreter can communicate the meaning to the mind. In fact, there was the danger that if an unsaved visitor had been present, he would have been repulsed by the senseless speech he heard in the Church since it had not been interpreted, 1 Corinthians 14:23.
 - 4. In 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, Paul countered the disorderly way the Corinthian believers were using their spiritual gifts, with everyone trying to use their speaking gift at once to the lack of the edification of the body (1 Cor. 14:26). Paul had to direct those who had the gift of languages to speak only two to three in a given service, and that in consecutive order, with each utterance being interpreted, the same with the prophets, and for the women to keep silent in the Church to be respectful, 1 Corinthians 14:27-35.
- E. Nevertheless, Paul realized from God's gracious and profuse deliverance of these manifold spiritual gifts to the Corinthian believers that these folk were rightly waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:7b), and that He would "strengthen, establish" (*bebaioo*, Ibid., p. 138) them unto the end of their earthly pilgrimage that they might be "blameless, irreproachable" (*anegkletos*, Ibid., p. 63) in the day of Christ, that is, at the rapture of the Church, 1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 1:4. This blamelessness would occur either if Paul's readers confessed their sin and relied on the Holy Spirit to overcome carnality or had their ungodly works burned up at Christ's Judgment Seat (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) all due to their positional sanctification in Christ.
- F. Either way, God was faithful to achieve this status in Paul's readers at Corinth, and so the Lord had called them into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ their Lord, 1 Corinthians 1:9.

Lesson: *Though Paul's readers badly misused their spiritual gifts, the fact that they had been so profusely gifted by God so that they came behind in no one gift in the Church at Corinth meant that God had truly saved them and that He planned to strengthen them so they could one day stand blameless before Him at the rapture, be it by their obedience to God in overcoming carnality or in God's gracious destruction of false works at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God's faithfulness would produce this result, giving Paul reason for thanksgiving.*

Application: *(1) If we are discouraged over carnality in us or in other believers, may we focus on the presence of spiritual gifts in the carnal as God's encouraging evidence that they are saved and that God intends to strengthen and establish them that they might be blameless. (2) May we heed God's disciplining in our own lives that we might be blameless at the rapture versus seeing our works burned up at the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ!*