

[Introduction]

With a craggy face, a crooked finger, and a condemning, gruff voice, the devil whispers his accusations:

“Shame on you.”

“How dare you call yourself Christian?”

“Who are you that God should think about you or care about you?”

His goal is to make us second-guess our God and our calling

—the God who, in his great mercy, has *“saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5).

Unless the life-giving words of God’s grace intercept the devil’s death-dealing words, we are lost.

[Corinth]

Oh! How this was known in Corinth!

Corinth was a sinking city.

The quicksand of sin and shame had covered and overcome this city.

Two-thirds of the 650,000 residents were slaves.

We don’t know much about the converts in that city, but it is safe to guess most of the converts to the Way were from the bottom of the social ladder.

Christ was their only status; his cross their only symbol of hope.

A cozy, credentialed, social-club church would not do in this town.

Here, Paul was the Holy Spirit’s man speaking to the church, the *ekklēsia*, called out for the purpose of living out their calling.

[An Apostle]

Paul is called to be an apostle (v 1),

and during his second missionary trip he went to Corinth.

The very name Corinthian conjured up – well bad thoughts.

I’ll just say, not a one of you would want to be called a Corinthian girl.

Like sheep, many residents blindly followed into the vileness and vulgarity all around. Many answered the shameful calling to evil.

Their first pastor and founder, Paul, once quipped that he could not address the believers in Corinth as spiritually mature, but as “mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1).

In such an unreceptive place, unfriendly to the faith of Christ, Paul needed to establish some credentials before he could gain an audience.

Paul’s claim to credibility is found in verse one.
He describes himself as called by God to be an apostle.
This call was not something that Paul did, but something done for Paul.

In an eye-and-ear encounter, Christ called Paul.
You might say that Paul was knocked off his high horse.
And he is more than a firsthand witness to the risen Jesus;
he is an apostle.

He is one sent with authority to act on the behalf of his sender, the Lord Jesus.

God’s message, as heralded by Paul, is far from tepid or timid (1 Tim 1:7).
It is stereophonic, heard in Law and Gospel.
Paul never circumvents or tiptoes around the truth (Rom 1:16).

Confident of his apostolic calling, he is wholeheartedly invested in the Gospel’s power to save; he persuasively proclaims it “*with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power*” (1 Cor 2:1–5).

The unstable and divided church at Corinth heard Paul reveal God’s clear will concerning them—that all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).

God desires the same enriching, the same saving, the same wholeness for us.
[*Saints*]

Paul is called to be an apostle (v 1), and we are called to be saints
simul justus et peccator – Same time saint and sinner.

Day and night the devil drags up our shameful shortcomings and brings forth painful accusations against the saints of God (Rev 12:10).

Not only does he batter us with our many moral failures,
but he shackles us with images of inferiority and feelings of self-hatred.

Heaps of shame are dumped on our sin-laden lives
until we cannot handle the guilt.

Inappropriate guilt leads to humiliation.

- Inappropriate guilt, on the other hand, will assail and attack the fact that we are called to be saints.
- Inappropriate guilt cheapens the gift of God and amplifies the wages of sin (Rom 6:23).

The devil's voice would have us:

- live in a stunted and stunted sense of personhood,
- brainwashing us into actually becoming the embodiment of a lie from the father of lies.

This voice intends to fool us into rejecting Christ's grace, mercy, and peace.

NOW *Appropriate guilt leads to humility before God.*

Appropriate guilt is recognition of sin that leads to repentance (2 Cor 7:10).

Having experienced the Law of God,

the sinner regrets and turns from wickedness,

and the Gospel light of forgiveness shines on his heart (2 Cor 4:6).

The Confessions resonate with this truth.

The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* says:

“Faith does not remain in those who lose the Holy Spirit and reject penitence; as we have said before, faith has its existence in penitence” (XX 13; Tappert, p. 228).

[*Enriched!*]

We are poor, miserable sinners, but God does not leave us there sinking into sin.

No! We are called to be enriched in every way (v 5).

To enrich means to add something that was not already present.

Foods and drinks are often advertised as enriched

with vitamin C or niacin or some other vitamin.

It is a deficiency for Christians not to see themselves as sinners redeemed by grace and hence as holy before God.

From our mother's womb

we are deficient, ineffectual, and lacking any ingredients for salvation.

We need to be enriched in Christ.

Paul regarded the Corinthians as “mere infants in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1).

And yet, because of the redemptive supply of Christ, he views them as

“sanctified in Christ Jesus” (v 2) and people for whom he ***“always”*** thanks God.

You see...

It is only *en Christō*, “in Christ” (v 2), that we are called out as saints (v 2), and then enriched by the word of faith (v 5).

The Word conveys

- that we are redeemed from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13);
- that we are redeemed through Christ's blood (Eph 1:7);

- that we are rescued from the dominion of darkness (Col 1:13); and
- that we are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18).

All of this God did for us through the sacrificing atonement of Jesus Christ.

These first nine verses of I Corinthians stress that at the center of this calling is Christ. He is named no less than nine times.

We are enriched through Word and Sacrament – the means of Grace.

Later in this letter to the Corinthians,

Paul suggests that the believer is called to God by the Spirit in Holy Baptism: *“You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor 6:11).

You are enriched in your baptism!

The Lord’s Supper likewise enriches us because the blood that Jesus shed on Calvary has salutary power, which flows into the communion cup.

In a moment you will hear the communion liturgy. Listen again for the threefold definition of grace, namely, forgiveness, life and salvation.

As forgiveness is served, we are enriched in our sense of calling —like a supercharged nutritional drink for our souls.

We are called to be in communion (v 9).

[*Conclusion*]

In this calling

—to remain in Christ and in the communion of his body of believers (1 Cor 12:13),

—to benefit from the blessings of baptism,

—to know the power of the Word that does what it says,

—we are empowered to live richly as saints of God (Jn 15:5).

Faith is nursed and nurtured only as we are connected to Christ.

Yeah, as saved children of God, this is what we do.

We are constantly connected to Christ!

Enriched ... No shame in being rich! Amen!

Now, let us ... make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!