The Perfect Church – November 9, 2014

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Introduction:

Good afternoon everyone. Last week we were talking about the body of believers and how we are to relate to one another. I would like to build upon that and talk about the church in a larger sense this week. What I am talking about are the local churches found throughout Korea, Asia and all over the world. So, what’s your idea of the perfect church? Does that mean perfect members, a huge congregation, a large number of programs or an excellent choir? Is the perfect church the early church that he hear about in the book of Acts? From Paul’s perspective, the perfect church is the church in Christ. We need to remember that the church in Corinth was full of problems, but Paul focuses on God’s work despite those problems. Three things exist in the Corinthian church and are true in every church of God.

1. Called by God (vv. 1-3)
   1. Notice that Paul uses the word *call* three times in his opening greeting. He begins by describing himself as “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ”. Paul says he is an apostle, a messenger.
      1. If you remember, in his earlier life, Paul hated Jesus Christ and did all that he could to stop those who followed Jesus.
      2. That was until Jesus literally stopped him in his tracks and set his life on a new course.
   2. Paul also uses *called* to describe those in the Corinthian church, who were “called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours”. This includes all Christians everywhere.
   3. And here is the third call – Christians are those who *call* on the name of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior as a response to his call.
   4. Then the greeting to the church follows in verse 3. He expresses God’s grace (unmerited favor and love) and God’s peace (well-being and wholeness which God the Father gives to His children). If you belong to Christ, you share in these privileges with our brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world.
2. Enriched by God (vv. 4-7)
   1. God will complete His will – to build His church
      1. God has provided the people of His church with all the resources that they need
      2. Despite the problems at the church in Corinth, Paul surprises us by saying that he gives thanks to God that they have been enriched in everything and come short in no gift.
   2. Remember that many of the problems they were having at the church in Corinth were centered on the use or abuse of spiritual gifts.
      1. Paul knew that the problem wasn’t the gifts, but the misuse of them
      2. He is grateful for the gifts themselves which are of God
   3. Mentioned are two broad areas of the Lord’s gifts: speaking gifts, which focus on speaking truth, and knowledge gifts, which focus on explaining truth (v. 6).
      * 1. These gifts are evidence or confirmation that the Corinthians are genuine Christians (v. 6). So, if you are a genuine Christian, God has gifted you.
   4. Instead of thinking of what we lack, we should rejoice and give thanks that God has given the church all that we need.
3. Kept by God (vv. 8,9)
   1. Verse 7 ends with these words: “eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Corinthian Christians have every spiritual gift they need but they have not yet arrived at perfection because Christ has not yet returned.
   2. The gifts they received needed to be used so that the church could function and live as God intends in preparation for Christ’s return.
   3. Once again, Paul shifts the focus from the church to God the Father and to Jesus with a note of future assurance, “who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9**God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Conclusion:

So are we a perfect church? If Paul could have such confidence about God’s ability and commitment to the church in Corinth, surely we should have such confidence about our church and even about ourselves. Since God has called us into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, He has gifted us with all we need and will hold us firm until the end. Let us take great joy and rejoice in what the Lord has provided for us. Remember that we don’t find our confidence based in ourselves but in the God that has called us by name to be His children.

**2 Peter 3:18**

**18**…grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.