

# *A Spiritual Spring for the Week*

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Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-19

Sermon Title: "Enriched in Christ & Standing against Temptation" (Trekking through First Corinthians)

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

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**{SLIDE 1}** Before we get into what Paul says to the Corinthians, let us take a look at the city of Corinth itself. The people get their name from the city called Corinth. The city actually exists today. It can be found in the country of Greece. It is situated on the Corinth Gulf, which eventually makes its way to the Mediterranean Sea. So Corinth is a port city. Lots of ships come into its harbors carrying all sorts of precious goods from all sorts of countries. That means the city isn't filled with only one race of people, the Greeks. People from different races and different political and religious views enter and exit the city every day. They transport their items from exotic places, and they know they will get a good price for what they peddle. Corinth was a vast city that became wealthy by all the trade that passed through. It had impressive ancient architecture and a booming marketplace.

But the city's reputation was not a respectable one. Corinth was the city where a person could have a good time, if you know what I mean. Carnal lusts were all

the rage within the city walls. Sacred prostitution was a custom and an acceptable way to worship certain gods.<sup>1</sup> People could have their way and have lots of fun, and do it all again the next day and the next night. The saying went that if a person was acting in a sexually immoral way, they were acting like a Corinthian.<sup>2</sup> Think of a port city with a bunch of sailors in it, and we get an idea of what the city of Corinth was like.

**{SLIDE 2}** Now that I have painted such a vivid picture for us to conjure with, we may understand what Paul was dealing with. Paul had to struggle with a culture that smacked right up against the ministry he tried to carry out. The good news of Jesus Christ speaks of purity; the city promoted impurity. The message of Christ calls people toward self-control; the city wanted people out-of-control. The call of Christ points us to our loving God; the city pointed people to their deepest, most selfish desires.

The church of Corinth wasn't so much a church like we know it today. It was a gathering of believers across the city. They met in homes if they were Greeks, and possibly in synagogues if they were Jewish. They came together when they could to have

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<sup>1</sup> *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, Paul J. Achtemeier (General Editor), cf. 183.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Nelson Publishers, *The Nelson Study Bible (NKJV)*, cf. 1911.

church: to worship and sing and preach, to teach and to learn, to grow in their faith as one people. In the midst of all of that was having to deal with a promiscuous city, a wealthy city that loved its wealth and loved whatever yearnings it could offer. Daily these new believers in Christ had to run the gauntlet of temptation after temptation, of seeing people who seemed to have a good time and had no cares in the world. Daily they had to ignore what the city wanted them to do, and what God was calling them to do which was totally opposite, totally righteous.

**{SLIDE 3}** This is what the believers had to deal with, and Paul knew it full well. Paul understood the struggles, understood how easy it would be to slip and fall away from God. One person in one household, of example, could hold to the “beliefs” of the city, living the carefree life he or she wanted, while the other person, possibly a spouse, tried to raise the family properly. The one spouse tried to teach the children about mortality as Christ taught, while the other didn’t care for such things and taught the children to just go with their feelings. The one spouse would try to steer the children toward a Christian gathering in a person’s home, while the other wanted to steer them toward the marketplace where the action was. The spouse would try to live a different life that was freer than the life Corinth could offer, freer than his or her spouse

wanted to experience, a life with more grace and courage and purpose.

Paul understood this. He knew what the Corinthians battled day in, day out. He had experienced the pressures himself. He had visited and witnessed the temptations around every corner. It took a lot of strength, a lot of courage, to ignore what was going on.

{SLIDE 4} “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,” Paul writes to the Corinthian Christians. This is a typical introduction from Paul, as he writes to various churches. He gives thanks for knowing the people to whom he writes, and he gives thanks to God for the work that is happening among those people.

Paul continues: “For in every way you have been enriched in Christ, in speech and knowledge of every kind.”<sup>3</sup> What does it mean to be enriched? The word *rich* is in the middle of the word, so we might think it has to do with money, wealth. If you ask the average person on the street what success means, they might say that it mostly has to do with having lots of money. It has to do with having the right career in the right

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:4-5.

city and making money hand over fist. {SLIDE 5} If you know anything about John Grisham novels, you would notice that he always writes about the young lawyer who hopes to go into law and become wealthy beyond imagine. In the last book I read, *The Associate*, the main character talked about lawyers becoming partners and making upwards of a million dollars a year. They would have to work crazy hours and hardly see their families, if they had any, but they would be categorized as being successful because of their position and because of their sizable bank accounts.

A person might be successful in business, but it doesn't mean he or she is successful. A person may have a large financial portfolio, but it doesn't mean he or she is "enriched," as Paul puts it to the Corinthians.

{SLIDE 6} Paul is speaking about spiritual enrichment that comes only from God. Christ lives in the hearts of a person and directs his life. The Holy Spirit speaks in the ear of the person to remind her that she is a children of God in all situations, in every circumstance.

When any temptation arises, the person who is enriched in Christ sees the temptation for what it is. When the person enriched in Christ sees others giving in to the temptation and they seem to have a good time

of it, she knows that such a way to live is not beneficial to anyone. The temptation is not a thing to take pleasure in; it is a thing to run away from. It is a thing that could take over and dominate the person's life, and then he begins to lack in faith and the enrichments of Christ are ignored.

Our lives today are no different. No matter how well we wake up on a particular morning, no matter how good the breakfast was and how good the coffee tastes, sin is going to find us at some point. We will be tempted; we will be enticed. It can come around the corner by way of the TV or Internet, and an image of wealth or violence or sexuality appears in a blink of an eye, and we may find ourselves hooked. Our minds go a different direction than the one we planned, and the one God wants us to be on. We will be given a chance to follow a different path and forget that we are children of God. We will be given a chance to walk away from our life in Christ.

Paul understands what the Corinthian Christians have to endure. He knows how sin lurks around every corner, ready to pounce. So he is thankful that they are enriched in Christ. He is thankful that they heard the word of God once, and they continue to hear the word of God that gives them strength every day. He is thankful that they receive knowledge from God's word

on how to speak, think, and act in any situation. They may stand against the temptations but they may do so with joy in their hearts. They may stand with no frustration or anger in their hearts, no bitterness or bickering to drag them down. They will not be tempted to sink to a level that causes them to act like those who are tempted. They relish in the rich gifts that God gives to all who believe in Christ. They rejoice in knowing that they are growing in a different kind of success; knowing God more deeply, more confidentially with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**{SLIDE 7}** Paul says that the enrichment of God will come to the Corinthians, that they will hold on to their enrichment and stand against all things to the end of all things. “[Christ] will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> When it is all said and done, when the Christians of Corinth have stood against the immortality of the city and stated, “We aren’t going to play that silly game,” they will remain blameless before the Lord. We will remain pure and righteous through their faith in Christ.

Blameless, isn’t that a nice word? Blameless – to be seen as blameless. To have not one blot on our

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:8.

character, to have not one dent in our integrity. It would be nice to rise above culpability, fault, guilt.

**{SLIDE 8}** Too many times we hear people putting the blame on others. They point the finger and say that the person is guilty as sin. Sadly, one of the places we hear this a lot is in our own US government. How many hearings do we have on Capitol Hill every single year, ever single month? Somebody is to blame for something that occurred, and there has to be hearing upon hearing on what happened and how the person can pay for it. Even after the hearings are done, people still point the finger at those who are supposedly to blame. It could be the 9/11 attacks, Benghazi, or wiretapping. There are those who will never stop pointing the finger, never get over the incident, never find ways to move forward. “It is all your fault!” they will scream until the cows come home.

**{SLIDE 9}** Paul says that those who are enriched by God through Christ, those who watch their speech and guard their knowledge, who surround themselves with the excellent things of God: they will be blameless up until the end. They will have traveled through the temptations and not allowed sin to cause damage in their lives. They stand pure before God and their reward is great.

To be blameless is an awesome thing. To know

that we tried the best we could, that we might have failed from time to time. Sometimes we slip and fall, but as long as God is picking us up again, as long as we continue to wrestle with our faith and draw closer to God. To know that Christ was walking with us along the way, that it wasn't we who needed to get ourselves straightened out. Sometimes we feel like it is all on us to remain blameless, to push sin away; but it is Christ who has pushed our sin away. It is through Christ's righteousness that we are made blameless. Nothing can stick to us as long as faith is given to us by God and we grow in that faith with the Holy Spirit. No one can point the finger and say, "It's all your fault," as long as Christ has erased the sin and remembers it no more.

**{SLIDE 10}** It is nice to know that there is a way out, an escape from all the negativity and corruption of the world. Once the Corinthian Christians got a hold of Jesus Christ, they understood that it would be a big struggle to live in a city filled with all that opposes Jesus Christ. Day in and day out that had to face it. In their own homes, they also might have had to face it. Paul assured them, though, that there is an end to it. There is an escape. The city doesn't have the final say; Christ does. Our sin and our temptations do not have the final say; Christ does. Christ is with us. Christ will deliver us from the negativity and

corruption. Christ will rise us up and enrich us even more with his good graces. Christ makes sure we remain with God and will remain up until the end.

*The Assurance of Pardon:*

Hear the good news! Who is in the position to condemn us? Only Jesus Christ is, and he died for us. Christ rose for us. Christ reigns in power for us. Christ intercedes for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Friends, believe the gospel: in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.