

Sermon 12-3-17 God will keep you strong until the end I Corinthians 1:3-9

Dear Beloved of God:

This time of year people are traveling.

- The Wednesday before Thanksgiving is the most traveled day in America.
- The Sunday after Thanksgiving is the 2nd most traveled day in America.
- Think of how many people will travel over the next few weeks to be with their family and friends over the Christmas period into the New Year.

Traveling this time of year is not always easy.

- There is the possibility of bad weather
- There is the overwhelming challenge of dealing with the crowds on the road and in the airports.

So, why do we put up with travel this time of year? Because we love to be with our loves ones!

Think how far Jesus traveled to be with us.

- He left the throne of heaven to become one of us
- He left the glory of heaven to become an embryo in Mary's womb
- "The God of the universe kicked against the wall of a womb, was born into the poverty of a peasant and spent his first night in the feed trough of a cow...The God of the universe left the glory of heaven..." The Next Door Savior, p. 85

Why did Jesus travel so far to come to our world?

- Because he loves to be with the ones he loves
- Because he came to be our strength and salvation

The Apostle Paul wrote these words from I Corinthians to remind believers...

- Who they were
- Who God was

The city of Corinth where these believers lived was about 45 miles west of present day Athens, Greece.

- Corinth was located on the water and known for its commerce, trade and shipbuilding
- Corinth was known for her many pagan temples of which the chief one was dedicated to the love goddess Aphrodite where more than 1000 priestesses served in the temple
- Corinth was known in Paul's day as the "sin-city" of the world

The Apostle Paul was called by God to go to this "sin-city" of Corinth because he knew...

- That God had not given up on these people who were lost in sin
- That the Corinthians were suffering under the rule of Satan
- That the Corinthians needed to hear that God loved them and wanted to be with them

The Apostle Paul spent a whole year in Corinth spending each Saturday in the Jewish synagogues preaching to Jew and Gentile alike. From Corinth Paul went to the city of Ephesus where he was when he sat down to write this letter before us this morning.

The Apostle Paul had a special place in his heart for these people in Corinth.

- The church was called Paul's "beloved, brilliant and wayward child."
- The church was known as a "marvel and a mess."

The church was a marvel because these people believed in Jesus as their Savior. The church was a mess because there were...

- Divisions among the members
- Misuse of Christian freedom
- Misuse of spiritual gifts
- Some members lived by the pagan philosophy that "Everything is permissible"

King Solomon said in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes that “There is nothing new under the sun.”

- Don't we, too, live in a pagan society?
- Don't we, too, live with our share of trials and temptations?
- Don't' we, too, struggle with our own sinful words and actions?

We need to hear Paul's words, too....

- That God loves to be with us
- That God will never give up on us
- That God will be strong for us
- That God has called us to be lights for Jesus in this dark world

Sanctified in Christ Jesus

Paul reminds us that we are “sanctified in Christ Jesus” v2 Which means that...

- Before God created the world the Bible says he “chose us to be his” Eph 1
- At the cross God thought of us when Jesus said: “It is finished”
- The Holy Spirit has moved into our hearts because the Bible says: “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” I Corinthians 12:3

In Christ, the believers of Corinth have been “separated” from the wicked culture of Corinth.

- They had been devoted to the serve of the true God
- They had been declared by God to be “set apart”

We, too, have been called to be “set apart”

- As citizens of heaven not of this old sinful world Phil. 3:20
- As members who make up the Body of Christ
- As lights in this dark world shining the Gospel into the lives around us

God has invested much in you and me...the very blood of Jesus spent on the cross.

God will not give up on you or me and he will continue to be strong for us no matter what we may go through. We have much to be fearful of in life...

- Medical tests
- Our children's future
- Retirement funds
- Job security
- Personal security

Philip Yancey says: "In the face of such everyday fear, Jesus points to a lily or a sparrow and calmly says: "Trust. Seek first the kingdom of heaven." Trust does not eliminate the bad things that may happen or whatever sparked our fear in the first place. Trust simply finds a new outlet for anxiety and a new grounding for confidence which is God. Let God worry about the worrisome details of life, most of which are out of my control anyway." Rumors of Another World p. 217ff

God will keep us strong. Vv5-6

Enriched

Verse 5 says we have been "enriched" in every way.

- This means "second to none"
- Our lives are "second to none" when compared to unbelievers
- King David wrote: "Yours, O Lord is the kingdom...in your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all..." I Chron. 29:11ff
- We are given what we need to live physically and spiritually everyday.

We are "enriched" everyday to live for the Lord. In the book Rumors Philip Yancey writes about the early Puritans in colonial America: "As the Puritans said, whether cleaning house or preaching sermons, shoeing horses or translating the Bible for the native Americans, any human activity may constitute an offering to God. In that spirit, Thomas Merton would later remark, "You can tell more about a monk by the way he uses a broom than by anything he says." P. 63

Martin Luther said that whatever our daily occupation whether we be farmers, milkmaids, butchers or cobblers we are to perform our daily work as if the Lord himself were watching. We serve him in whatever we do.

The Apostle Paul says we live this way as believers while we are “eagerly waiting” for Jesus to come back. V7

- While we wait for Jesus to come back we are to “shine like stars” in the universe as we speak the word of life in Jesus to others. Phil. 2:12

Blameless

- God will never give up on us...He will keep us strong until the end. Vv8-9
 - He will keep us “blameless” which means no accusation will stick to us
 - He will keep us strong, firm, durable and unshakeable until he comes back
 - He will see to it that we remain “blameless” – no accusation of sin can be brought against us because of what Jesus did for us.
 - Through faith we are united with Jesus forever

Jesus traveled far...very far...to come to our world...

- To love us
- To become one of us
- To keep us blameless
- To keep his promises to us

We need this assurance from God because...

- We live with sin all around us and in us
- Satan is always looking to accuse us --- to make us think we are not worthy enough to be loved by God
- God is faithful and will keep his promises he has made to us
 - We have nothing to fear because “...even the very hairs of our head are all numbered.
 - We have everything to live for because “...just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may have new life.”

- II Thessalonians 2:16-17 God gives us eternal encouragement and good hope which does not disappoint us

Our God is the Great Maker and Keeper of Promises...

- His Word is a collection of all the promises he has made to us
- Jesus has come to share the danger as well as the drudgery of everyday life
- He desires to weep with us and to wipe away our tears
- A broken and contrite heart he will not despise
- He longs to share in and to be the source of the laughter and the joy we experience
- He is with us in the midst of our daily routine lives...on the middle of the most mundane task there he is
- There can be no “ordinary” moments for people who live their lives with Jesus - Immanuel Reflections on the Life of Christ, p. 24ff

Psalm 34:15 “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry”