**1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, **2** To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, 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: **3**  Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8**  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.

**“Chosen For Life”**

 Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. In our age, we have come to know that life is complex. We can examine the DNA strand of a human being and gaze out into the depths of the universe. Yet, for all of this wonder, life seems to be more distant from us. Plenty go around asking that question, “What is my purpose in life?” If our culture glorifies the prime of life above all, then assisted suicide will become a way to escape the reality of aging. Finally, the dark side of life also became real when videos exposed Planned Parenthood selling the body parts of aborted babies. We know so much about life today and yet life seems more confused and lost than ever before.

 This was not so for Adam, even after the fall he was able to call his wife, “Eve.” There was no internet to google search for names or some complex equation to give an answer. However, seeing the first woman Adam knew, “Eve” was special for the name given her meant, “life.” God of course treasures life to depths humanity will never grasp. The coming of God’s Son to redeem the world praised the Father in stating, “…He who formed me from the womb to be his servant.” Likewise, John the Baptizer upon seeing Jesus proclaimed life saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Life is even more than common interests or a place to gather as Christians. The Church is full with life and that life pours out for us in Jesus Christ.

1. **Here we stand with God as the author of life.**
2. The opening words from Paul would have caught the attention of the Corinthians.
* He established their church on his second missionary journey.
* Yet, the credit of his apostleship was not like a sales man to which Corinth had many, but being “called by the will of God.”
* As Paul received a life of apostleship to Christ, so he made it a point to say, “To the church of God in Corinth.”
* The city of Corinth had one way of life, but the church had another for it belonged to God being a gift of His grace.
1. The church is a manifestation of life with God as the author.
* Now our society takes pride on creating businesses and glorifying names.
* Not surprising, people will look at the church like any other human institution.
* However, the first marker used by Paul for Christians coming together is, “the church of God” in such and such a place.
* Church in Greek means, “Those called out.” Baptism is where God proves not a city or culture is the church but those who hear the voice Christ and believe in Him.
1. **Here we stand on Christ sanctifying life.**
2. First, holiness did not come from the Corinthian Christians.
* Persecution was not the problem for Roman law protected them, but self-inflicted damage was everywhere.
* They were a congregation plagued with divisions, lawsuits, complacency, immorality, and even sinning against the Lord’s Supper at church.
* We dare not take a holier than though view, because following the world and our sinful nature is what we do best.
* How easy it is to quarrel and nitpick like customers. Coveting and making demands also comes second nature. Self-gratify sin comes on our terms and we lack love when it is no longer convenient.
1. Thankfully, the holiness of the Church never rests on its members.
* Before getting into the problems at Corinth, Paul celebrated their life saying, “To those sanctified in Christ.”
* This was holiness not from how well they handled life or satisfied the law of love, but the gift received by repentance and faith of what Christ alone gave to sinners.
* We rely on the same holiness given in baptism for, “…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 Corinthians 6:11)
* It means rather than the glory of its members or lack thereof, the Church is glorious because of Christ and His sacrifice. This holiness is still the presence of Him who is The Servant by Word and Sacrament.
1. **Here we stand as saints sharing life.**
2. If Christ called Paul to be an apostle, then those in Corinth were called to be saints.
* This spiritual fellowship was bigger than a single church, but “…together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
* Their salvation and identity as saints came from no other name for none other can save from sin, death, and the Devil.
* Faith was turning confidently to call upon Christ and not trust in works, popularity, or some other glory in Corinth.
* Their situations were different throughout the world, but the saints in every place depended upon the same Lord and Savior.
1. There are plenty of personal interests groups, but the Church is saints sharing life in Christ alone.
* We share in a witness where the Father has said of His Son, “I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
* We share in that light of forgiveness Jesus delivers and by the Lord’s Supper we join to say louder than John, “Behold, The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”
* We share in life the world cannot give or our efforts achieve, but a fellowship with Christ where even now death only glorifies His saints.
* We share in love that defends the weak and values life so the saints are not striving for social justice, but just looking to Jesus who loves us in all times and places.

 The Church is full with life and that life pours out for us in Jesus Christ. This may be hard to see in changing times that seem out of control. It is certainly more complex than any person can fathom. The mess might leave you wondering, “What’s the point!” And so as it was with life in Corinth, St. Paul simply says again today, “To the church of God that is in Sioux Valley/Lake Park, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, 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: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen. The peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.