

**A. WHO IT'S FROM**

## 1. Paul (:1)

- a. Saul of Tarsus – prodigy of Gamaliel – persecutor of the church (Acts 7-9)
  - 1) Saul was guilty of doing the wrong thing for the right reason...
  - 2) Converted (Acts 9) – several years reconciling what he knew before w/what he knew now: Jesus IS the Savior God promised in Gen 3
- b. An apostle = ambassador : authorized/appointed representative/messenger
- c. By the will of God – the most important part
  - 1) not everyone is called to be an apostle
  - 2) But whatever you are, make sure it's by the will of God
    - a) you need more than a good idea
    - b) you need more than success in the eyes of others
    - c) you need more than happiness (based on what happens)
  - 3) When you are what you are by the will of God:
    - a) it's more than a good idea, it's a God idea
    - b) you find more than success, you find satisfaction
    - c) you find more than happiness; you find joy, peace & purpose that circumstances can't take away
- d. He used to be Saul of Tarsus, the rabbi who arrested people for believing in J.
  - 1) Now he's Paul the Apostle who's entire life is devoted to helping people believe in Jesus
  - 2) If that doesn't show you that God can meet you where we are, and use you to His glory, I don't know what does

(The next thing we learn about this letter is...)

**B. WHO IT'S TO**

## 1. To The Church In Corinth (:2)

## a. Corinth...

- 1) Location: Greece; isthmus between Saronic Gulf (E) Corinthian Gulf (W)
  - a) drag boats across narrowest point (4 mi.)
  - b) started canal Roman times, finished in 1890's
- 2) History: In 146 BC Rome conquered Greece, destroyed Corinth
  - a) In 46 BC Julius Caesar rebuilt Corinth
  - b) Paul's time: center of commerce, hub for shipping throughout the Mediterranean world
- 3) People: Melting pot of retired Roman soldiers, Jewish merchants, Gentiles, sailors, etc...
- 4) Culture: Sin city : gambling, prostitution, scams & scams artists, every sort of religion from statues & idols to temple prostitutes (male & female)
  - a) 'cuz of mix of people, traditions, etc. really had no cultural identity of it's own
- 5) Corinth was the big city your mama warned you about!

## 2. Church of God (called out of the world, to the Lord) "hey, you guys!"

## a. sanctified (set apart) in Christ Jesus

- 1) being set apart is a done deal spiritually / an ongoing process practically
  - a) when you take God at His word, you are forgiven/justified & set apart for eternal life
  - 1/ from the moment you put your faith in Jesus – who He is & what He's done for you - you can never be MORE forgiven/justified than you are at that moment
  - b) in the mean time, in this non-eternal life, as the truth of who we are in Christ takes root in our thinking; as we are transformed (Rom 12:1) by the Word, our set-apart-ness is expressed more & more fully in this life

## b. called to be saints : (subtle distinction)

- 1) called = adj (vs. verb) = invited

- 2) i.e. saints because God called/invited them
- 3) cf. :1 – Paul a called apostle (what kind of apostle? a called apostle)

(The third thing we learn about this letter is...)

### **C. HOW IT STARTS (:3)**

#### 1. Grace To You...

a. Grace - God's unmerited, unearned, undeserved favor - is that aspect of the character of God, without which we would have no hope

- 1) justice is getting what you deserve
- 2) mercy is not getting what you deserve
- 3) grace is getting what you don't deserve

b. There is the grace that saves us

- 1) Because of God's grace we can be forgiven, reconciled & restored to a right relationship w/God, simply by trusting Jesus
- 2) Eph. 2:8-9 = "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

a) God reaches down to us with grace. When we reach back & take hold of Him w/faith, that grace/faith connection is what saves us

- 1/ justice requires a penalty for sin: that penalty is separation from God
- 2/ mercy spares us from that penalty
- 3/ it's Grace that makes it all possible

b) But it's not that we get a "pass" on sin

- 1/ on the cross Jesus satisfied God's perfect justice
- 2/ with justice satisfied, mercy & grace can flow – and they do!
- 3) That's the grace that saves us

c. The very same grace keeps us

- 1) Grace doesn't just forgive what we've done: it forgives what we are: sinners
- a) we're not sinners because we sin; we sin because we're sinners
- 2) grace makes us right and, just as importantly keeps us right, w/God
- 3) our part is to trust/believe/expect the Lrd to do what He's promised to do
- 4) and surrender ourselves to receiving what He's promised to give us

#### 2. ...And Peace

a. Without grace there is no peace

1) apart from God's one-sided decision to love us just the way we are, with a love that seeks our best no matter what it costs Him, we would never know peace

b. First, we have peace w/God

- 1) When you're forgiven there's no more guilt; no more fear; no more tension or dis-ease between you & God
- 2) You're forgiven, just as if you'd never sinned to begin with
- 3) That's peace with God

c. Then we have the peace of God

1) In the same way that grace saves us and keeps us, the peace we have WITH God becomes the ongoing peace OF God in our lives

e.g. Once you GET married, you ARE married. It's not something you DO, it's something you ARE.

#### 3. From God Our Father And The Lord Jesus Christ

a. God is our Father (cf. John 1:12) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

- 1) God is our Father and, just like earthly fathers, He loves His kids;
- a/ He wants the best for His kids; And when we make decisions that He knows are gonna hurt us He hurts for us;
- b/ but He's not mad AT us: He always loves us.

b. Jesus is our Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10-11) "...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

1) Lord isn't a word we use or hear much. I wonder if it means what we think it means.

a) When we think of Jesus as Lord we might think it means that we have to give up everything we enjoy in life; but that's not what it means

b) We might think it means we've got to do things we don't enjoy & don't want to do because He's demanding; but that's not what it means

2) "Lord" simply means the one to whom we are devoted

a) the one we trust : the one we love : the one we enjoy pleasing

b) the one we know always has our best interests in mind – even when we can't see how that's possible

3) Some day EVERYone will call Him Lord. But you don't have to wait for someday

Closing

1. You can make Jesus Lord of your life right now, right here

a. You can reach out to Him in faith and connect with His grace

b. You can be forgiven/justified, sanctified/set apart

c. You can have peace WITH God and know the peace OF God in your life – no matter what happens

d. And all you have to do is respond to His call, His invitation, by trusting Him & inviting Him into your life

e. And then... that's when the greatest adventure you'll ever know, begins