1 Corinthians 1:4-9: 4I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus. 5You were enriched in him in every way, in all your speaking and all your knowledge, 6because the testimony about Christ was established in you. 7As a result you do not lack any gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let me share with you an interesting result of my illness with covid. I don’t understand why, but at this point if you were to try and serve me whole wheat bread, I would not eat it. Ever since I was sick, I have an aversion to whole wheat bread. Now, I understand, whole wheat bread is better for you. But for right now, serve me good old fashioned white bread. That surprises me.

It surprises me because I remember hearing that the regular white bread loaves that we most commonly use are basically void of any nutritional value. As I understand it, by the time they get done grinding, bleaching, sifting, and baking those loaves, they contain little that is of use to our bodies. Again, as I understand it, you will find that almost all white bread in use today is bread that carries with it the label: “enriched.”

What that means is that after they’ve taken all the nutritional value out, they put it back in. They “enrich” it so that it has more value to us than just being filler. I can’t imagine why anyone would take a basically healthy product like wheat and process it in such a way as to have it lose what is natural to it; only to artificially put it back in. The only thing I can say about that is, “That’s life.” At least, because of “enriching” bread does have some nutritional value! I am grateful for that, because right now, that’s what I eat.

What made me think of that was the text before us and what it said. The Apostle Paul in writing to the church at Corinth says, **“You were enriched in him in every way.”** Just as bread has been enriched for our health and good, so you and I are “enriched” by Jesus. To understand what that fully means consider that the word for “enriched” is defined: “to cause someone to have an abundance of that which is of value or worth, to make rich in.”

These words of Paul, really the Holy Spirit of God, are just as meaningful to us as they were to the Corinthians. We are enriched, we are given an abundance, are made rich in Jesus Christ and what he has to offer. Let’s take the time to come to grips with just what we have been enriched in. Our theme will be: **ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY.**

It is very fitting to have such a text before us, especially since this Sunday is called: “Advent 1.” Advent is the beginning of the church year and also the beginning of what we call the festival half of the church year. The festival half of the church year is designed to show us the life of Jesus. Advent leads us to think of his coming Nativity and of His second coming as God and Lord. Advent then leads to Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ. Christmas leads to Epiphany, a season where we contemplate the wonder and marvel of just who this baby born for us is. Next comes the season of Lent where we contemplate exactly what it is that Jesus has done for us, especially his Passion, the record of his atoning sacrifice for our sins. Following Lent is Easter, six Sundays of Easter, where we focus on the complete redemption and sure salvation that is ours because Jesus lives. During Easter comes the Sunday of Ascension, where Jesus assumes his rule over all the world. Then comes Pentecost, that festival that is the very beginning of the Christian church and the proclamation of the Gospel for all the world to hear. Yep, that is the festival half of the church year and it is clear we will contemplate the marvel of Jesus and just what it is He is bringing us.

Now when I say, “Us” I mean you and me as children of God and heirs of eternal life. You know, Christians! As Christians, each one of us has the same task. We have the task of using our talent and gifts to the glory of the Lord. We are called upon to be His light in this world and beacons of the truth of Jesus and God’s Word. But in truth, if you are like most people, you somehow feel that you are not at all qualified for the task before you. Yet, nothing is further from the truth.

When Paul writes and says, **“You were enriched in every way”** and then tells us that that enriching is done through Jesus, those are words that are true. Consider what Paul reveals to us about enriching when he says in our text, **“As a result you do not lack any gift as Christ was established in you.”**

Those words are so simple. We are told that through Jesus we have everything spiritual that we need. What do we need? Faith, God’s Word, the Holy Spirit, the gift of salvation, eternal wisdom and the comfort of God are but a few of the gifts poured upon us. In fact, there isn’t a single spiritual thing that you could think of, that hasn’t been given to you through Jesus. In grasping that truth, you grasp that God in his mercy and grace has provided every spiritual gift necessary for eternal life and salvation, which is exactly the message of our text.

In that regard, I can’t help when I hear these words of Paul that I should think of the words of David and his inspired words of the Holy Spirit. **“The Lord is my Shepherd. I lack nothing.”** There isn’t a thing that hasn’t been provided, given, or is available for use in the spiritual world. Grace, mercy, forgiveness, understanding, patience, kindness, love, guidance…again I tell you, as God’s Word proclaims, there is nothing you can think of that God hasn’t provided for our salvation.

Paul goes on and tell us of another quality of this “enriching” that we have through Jesus. He says, **“He will also keep you strong until the end.”** How will God keep us strong? The answer is quite simple. It is through the spiritual gifts he has given, especially through the gift of His Holy, inspired Word. It is through the Word, the revelation of Jesus, the Word that carries the power of Jesus, that God has revealed, shown and promised us everything in connection with faith. As long as we stick to what God’s Word says, we won’t have any problems in the area of faith and eternal salvation.

Consider that Word for a minute. In John 20:31 we read, **“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”** In Hebrews 4:12 we hear: **“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to the point of dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, even being able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart.”** 2 Timothy 3:15-17 gives us perhaps one of the greatest descriptions of the Word. **“And that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.”**

It is God’s Word that power packed revelation of Jesus that keeps us strong to the end. It will keep us strong in the promises of God, in our faith in those promises, and in our everyday life and battles. It gives us hope, comfort, joy and peace. It gives guidance and light for all the darks times of this world. The Word of God equips us for all the tasks that we face as Christians and yes, even for all the task we face as we **“walk through this valley of the shadow of death.”**

If you really want to know, the biggest battle we face is the battle to keep God’s Word pure and true among us. It won’t do us any good to have the Word and to gut it of the truth it reveals. Just as wheat is taken and in the process of making bread is stripped of all its nutritional value, there are those people, those churches that would like to do the same thing with God’s Word. We need to make sure that we keep God’s Word pure and true among us, for when we lose the value of God’s Word, when we decide that it is nothing more than the writings of men, when we gut it of the majesty of God and the marvel of Jesus, then we will lose the gift of eternal life and the hope and comfort the Word brings.

In that regard then I would urge each of you to make sure that God’s Word is the thing that forms the base of your life. We are encouraged in Colossians 3:16-17, **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. And everything you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”** Let God and his Word be your guiding light in every aspect of your life, be you husband, wife, child, laborer, executive, or child of God in this world of ours.

When you consider the wonder of what we have been given and the task that lays before us, it can be overwhelming. I’m only talking about the task of being an everyday Christian. It is overwhelming because we see and know our sinfulness and we recognize our inability to perfectly carry out God’s will, in truth we recognize just how far short we fall in doing anything Godly, let alone doing it perfectly as the Law commands.

We know we will sin. We know we will stumble and fall in the following of God’s Word. We know these things and we worry that our sin will destroy the faith we have or that our sin will cause God to reject and condemn us. And because we fear these things, all too often we decide it would just be best not to do anything “Christian” somehow figuring that’s better than trying and not being perfect.

I can’t help but think that as Paul spoke about the enrichment that Jesus has given us that he fully realizes how our human minds work. It is for that reason that we are given the final reminder of our text in regards to that enrichment of Jesus. Paul says, **“He will also keep you strong until the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

It is not our sin that will destroy our faith. Faith has been given to overcome the fear and curse of sin. The thing that will destroy faith is unbelief. Unbelief in the form of not repenting, not grasping the sorrow of sin, not hearing and following God’s Word and not doing what God asks. Sin will lead to unbelief when you begin to insist and persist in sin, when you fall off the path of God and refuse to let God pull you out of that ditch of destruction.

As Christians we will hear and follow God’s Word. We will do what God asks of us. We will sin, but we will do what God asks of us. But here is the kicker. So often, even many of you today who hear this message, right now you are thinking in terms of your life, being right, following the Law, really, really living so good that God must be pleased with you. Have you not heard what I have said? We can’t do that. We fall short, we are sinful, the good that we want to do, that’s not what we do and the evil we don’t want to do that’s what we keep on doing. Hearing and following God’s Word is not a matter of the law and commandments, it is grasping what Jesus is about. Listen to this small compendium of verses from 1 John. **“If we walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness…we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world…And this is what he promised you: eternal life…See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are…Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as Jesus is pure…This is how we have come to know love: Jesus laid down his life for us…This then is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ…this is how God’s love for us was revealed: God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins…This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”**

That’s what Paul is talking about when he says, **“You will be blameless.”** We are blameless because we are forgiven. We are forgiven because of what Jesus has done. We put all our hope, confidence and the sureness of eternal life in Jesus and his work of redemption. That’s truly the “enrichment” that God has promised. Yes, to you as a Christian, I say, or rather God says, **“You are enriched in Jesus in every way.”** You lack nothing for your calling as a child of God. You are given strength and wisdom. You are blessed with the forgiveness of sins and thus eternal life. And God will keep you strong. Thank you, Lord, for this awesome and eternal gift. Amen.