

Hope for a Hot Mess

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

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- This is probably a silly question, but how many of you are familiar with the term “Hot mess?”
- Just for kicks, I actually looked up the dictionary definition for “hot mess” this week:

“a person or thing that is spectacularly unsuccessful or disordered, especially one that is a source of peculiar fascination.” [1]

- How many of you have felt like a hot mess at some point recently?
- Maybe it’s a relationship that is complicated, a project at school or work that you can’t get on track, or even your walk with Jesus where you just can’t seem to stay consistent—you just feel like a hot mess.
- If that’s you this morning, then this message is for you.
- I am not going to necessarily fix your study habits or straighten out your relationship or even help you get out of bed on time.
- What I want to accomplish in our time together this morning is to give you hope for when your spiritual life feels like a hot mess.
- We are going to find that hope in God’s Word this morning, so open your Bibles to **1 Corinthians 1**.
- We are continuing our series through this incredible letter that we have titled “Rejecting Chaos. Embracing Christ.”
- Over the last two weeks, Jeff has introduced us to the church at Corinth.
- The people in Corinth had a lot going for them. They were in one of the largest cities in the empire with plenty of wealth, education, and influence.
- All this led to what Jeff referred to last week as an **overestimated sense of spiritual maturity** in the heart of the people of Corinth.
- Their pride blinded them to the divisions, sexual immorality, fighting, and confusion that was rampant in their congregation.

- They were following their culture instead of following Christ, and they didn't even realize it.
 - They thought they had it figured out, but as we have already alluded to, the church was really a hot mess!
 - Paul is getting ready to start addressing those issues in earnest in the section we will look at next week, but for today, we have one more piece of his introduction to look at.
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- Before he dives into correcting them, Paul is going to let the Corinthians know what he thanks God for when he thinks of them.
 - This is a fairly common feature in Paul's writings. He began many of his letters with a section of thanking God for something exceptional about that congregation.
 - In this letter, Paul does thank God for the Corinthians in **verses 4-9**, but this time, there's a twist.
 - Read through this section with me...
 - Where is Paul's focus here? Is it on how the Corinthians have behaved, or is it on what God has done? What God has done.
 - Right off the bat, Paul is working on undercutting that overestimated sense of maturity they developed.
 - That's why, expertly and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul turns their focus away from themselves and onto the God who is their hope and ours.
 - Everything he thanks God for in this passage focuses on God's work in them.
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- What does that mean for those of us who are hot messes?
 - Well, that's where we are going to find hope for us as well!
 - In fact, if you remember nothing else from this message, I want you to see that:
- Hope for a hot mess is found in the grace God gives.
- Let's unpack that together this morning by looking at the past, present, and future ways God's grace gives us hope.
 - Before we go any further, though, let me make sure we are clear on this: The hope and grace we are talking about this morning is only for those who have entered into a relationship with Jesus.

- In fact, let's jump down to the last phrase in **verse 9** to see that.
- Paul is writing to a group of people who have surrendered to God's call to salvation.
- While they are still figuring out all that means, they have trusted in Christ and are now in fellowship with Jesus through his work on the cross.
- We are going to explain more about what that means as we go through, but from the outset, I wanted you to see that so you are aware that if you are here and not yet a Christian, this hope is available for you if you surrender to Christ, but you have not yet received the grace of God that Paul is talking about here.
- With all that out of the way, let's look at how the grace of God gives us hope.
- **First, we look back at what God did when he saved us and see that...**

1) God has enriched us.

- That's what Paul explains in **verse 5-6**.
- God has given us grace by enriching us in every way.
- This is a unique term that Paul doesn't usually use, so there must have been something about Corinth that caused him to use it.
- We know that Corinth was a wealthy and powerful city, so it may be that Paul was intentionally pointing them to where their true wealth came from.
- Their true wealth wasn't in their money or influence; their true wealth was in Christ.
- Paul highlights this in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

Ephesians 1:3 CSB

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

- Never forget what God has done when he saved you.
- Before we are saved, we live lives where we are calling the shots and doing what we want instead of following the God who made us and gave us life.
- The Bible says you and I were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins and alienated from God.
- You had nothing to offer God and there was no way for you to fix it. In fact, we deserve to be separated from him forever.

- But God cares so deeply for us that he would trade our sin for Jesus's righteousness.
 - On the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for what we have done, and through his resurrection, he proved that he had overcome death.
 - Now, when we surrender our lives to following him as our Lord, our leader, our boss, we receive his life.
 - God takes away our sin and gives us Jesus's righteousness in its place—that's the grace Paul is thanking God for.
 - We are enriched beyond measure in every way as we get to experience his joy, his peace, his love, fellowshiping with him and looking forward to the day when we get to see him face to face.
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- As the Corinthians began to live out the grace God gave them in salvation, they proved that Jesus had worked in them.
 - That's what Paul highlights in **verse 6...**
 - The change in their lives proved that Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection really have the power to transform lives.
 - Here's where our hope begins when we recognize that we are a hot mess: If I am in Christ, then he has already enriched spiritually me in every way.
 - The life of Christ is in me and the righteousness of Christ has paid for my sin, not because I have been so awesome that I deserve it, but because of what he has done.
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- Our hope isn't just in what God did for us when we got saved, though.
 - Instead, it is an ongoing hope as we see the grace of God that he gives us today.
 - **In verse 7, we see that...**

2) God is equipping us.

- Have you ever started a new job where they didn't give you much training?
- Maybe you've been in a class where the professor spent about 5 minutes covering a topic and then expected you to be able to do some complex assignment based off that.
- They got you started, but then it was up to you to figure it out on your own.
- Not a great feeling, is it?

- Sometimes, we are tempted to feel that same way about the Christian life.
 - We get the salvation part right—that it's a gift from God, but now that we are saved, we act like it's all up to us.
 - That's not how this works at all, though. Go back and look at **verses 6-7** again.
 - God doesn't just give us grace that gets us saved; he also gives us grace that equips us to live out the life he has put in us.
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- We see that here in **verse 7** when Paul mentions "spiritual gifts."
 - This is the first time in the letter that Paul uses this word, and it is going to come up a lot in **chapters 12-14**.
 - In those chapters, Paul talks about a specific type of spiritual gifts that are different unique ways that God equips individual believers to reflect him and build up the church.
 - However, the Bible also uses this term to refer to the broader sense of the gifts God gives us in salvation.
 - This includes the gifts he mentions in **chapters 12-14** but also includes the rest of the gifts he gives us when we are saved.
 - This gets back to that idea of "every spiritual blessing" that we mentioned from **Ephesians 1:3** a few minutes ago.
 - The gifts God gives aren't just pretty items that sit on a shelf; the spiritual gifts God gives include the tools you and I need to live for him.
 - The Bible teaches us that when we come to Christ, he gives us the Holy Spirit.
 - He lives in us from the moment we come to Christ, and teaches us, corrects us, empowers us, and guides us.
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- So, how does that give me hope when I am a hot mess?
 - Because that means God didn't just give me grace to save me when I was 9 years old, but he is actively giving me grace through the spiritual gifts he has given me.
 - I am not strong enough or smart enough on my own, but God has given me his Spirit, so he has equipped me to live how he calls me to live.
 - You have what you need to have in order to do what God calls you to do.

- That doesn't mean it will be easy or that you won't be afraid or that you won't falter, but God has equipped you with every spiritual gift you need to keep walking with Jesus.
- You have the Spirit of God inside you to help you understand and apply the Word of God you see in front of you in the Bible.
- In case you wonder how to actually live this out, don't forget that, in this church, you are surrounded by people who are trying to serve God with the gifts he has given them, and you don't have to do it alone.
- Our small groups have just gotten underway, and I know they would be more than happy to have you jump in.
- I haven't been here all that long, but I can promise you based what I know about people in general that these groups are full of people who have seen God pull them through some serious hot-mess moments, and they would love to help you grow too.
- God has enriched us with the grace he gave us in the past. He currently equips us with everything we need to honor him.
- **There's one last aspect of this hope that we want to see, and that is the reality that...**

3) God won't give up.

- Man, this last part is such great news.
- At the end of **verse 7**, Paul brought up the fact that as Christians, we are eagerly awaiting the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- He is talking about the time when Jesus is going to come back and set everything right.
- He picks that theme back up in **verse 8**...
- Let that sink in a minute: He will also strengthen you to the end.
- Are you in Christ this morning? Have you genuinely been saved by his grace and equipped with his Spirit?
- God is not going to give up on you.
- He isn't going to get so frustrated with you that he abandons you, and you aren't going to get to the point where he runs out of strength to hold on.
- He will strengthen you until either the end of your life or the end of this age when Jesus returns, whichever comes first.

- The Bible repeats this promise over and over again, but I love the simplicity of his statement to the Philippians:

Philippians 1:6 CSB

I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- He will finish what he started!
- He enriched you, he equipped you, and he will sustain you to the end.
- This doesn't mean that you or I will be obeying Jesus perfectly when we die.
- Again, this all goes back to being in Christ: Because he has enriched me with Christ's life, I am and have been fully justified before God.
- The word Paul uses in **1 Corinthians 1:8** has the sense of "guiltless before the law"[2].
- Because of Christ's death and resurrection, there is nothing to condemn me in the eyes of God.
- That sounds like the first part about God enriching us...How is that a future hope?
- Because there are no take-backs!
- Look at **verse 9** again - He enriched, he gave, he will strengthen, and it is all based on his faithfulness, not mine!
- God is faithful—he won't give up on you!
- Now let's be clear about that: This doesn't mean we should just do whatever we want because we are going to get off scot free.
- That shows that we really don't understand this at all.
- In God's love, he sacrificed himself to pay for our sins and gave us his righteousness.
- Why would I want to keep sinning, to keep hurting the God who loves me so much he will never give up on me?
- At the same time, there is this incredible freedom that says I have hope in spite of the fact that I am a hot mess!

- In his grace, God has enriched me in every possible way.
 - In his grace, he has equipped me with what I need in order to honor him.
 - In his grace, he is faithful and will sustain me until the end.
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- As a church, we have the privilege of reflecting on this grace through what we refer to as the Lord's Supper or Communion, which we will observe in just a moment.
 - This ceremony, which Jesus modeled for his disciples, is an opportunity for us to stop and reflect on the sacrifice Jesus made that enabled us to have hope.
 - We will take the bread as a physical reminder of Jesus's body, which was broken for us. We will drink the juice as a reminder that his blood was poured out for us.
 - In fact, it was in this letter to the church at Corinth that God taught us that this observation is one way we proclaim Jesus's death until he comes.
 - The Lord's Supper is an observance reserved for those who have surrendered to Christ, so if you are here and are not yet a Christian, we would ask you politely to refrain from participating.
 - In just a moment, I am going to ask the first few rows to stand and make their way to the right of their row. From there, you will come down front, take a piece of bread and a cup and return to your seats.
 - When you get back to your seats, spend a few moments reflecting on Christ's death and praying with those who came with you if you so choose.
 - When you are ready, eat the bread and drink the juice as a reminder of God's grace given through Jesus's sacrifice.

Endnotes:

[1] <https://www.google.com/search?q=hot+mess>

[2] Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT. 43.