

All This is From God

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1 Corinthians 1:4-9

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The tragedy in Haiti has been in the news this past week; we were told of the terrible devastation, the impact on their already poor economy, and about the staggering number of deaths. Less than a month away from traveling to Haiti, an Iowa couple had been waiting anxiously for any news about their newly adopted child. But last Thursday ABC's Robin Roberts found her alive and well in an orphanage. Touching story. Very touching to everyone involved. The news report concluded that obviously God had been with them through this tragedy.

I listened to this report and was reminded of the many other tragedies we've seen where miracles like this occur; the survival reports from September 11th or from the Tsunami from a few years ago. The conclusion we draw is that when someone survives a tragedy like this, God must have been with them. So, what are we saying here, that God was not watching over those who died; that they perished because He was not on their side? I know those words were not spoken, but you know, to the person who has suffered a great loss, this thought is implied. It is implied if one simply listens to the words that are spoken.

I don't intend to get into some debate about "The Wrath of God" here. What I do want to point out though, is how often we create divisions among us by the careless things we say. For example, how do you suppose the Christian living in Peru must feel when we ask God to bless America? By the words of our mouth we create a *Schism*, where one group has set itself apart from the rest of the world *with a sense of superiority*. And sometimes this practice even finds its way into a church; where one group sets itself apart from another feeling itself to be far superior to the rest. This creates a *schism*; a division.

The Greek word *Schisma* occurs 8 times in the New Testament, three here in 1 Corinthians. And Paul knows about this schism simply by listening to what the people were saying. (**Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-12**). Notice specifically verse 12. By the words of their mouth they testify to the divisions (*Schisma*) of their heart. They have spoken words that indicate a sense of superiority; a sense of pride or

arrogance. And this has Paul quite upset. His solution to this problem is to remind them of one basic truth that surrounds Christianity in general, but more specifically any church that needs to escape from the schism that is tearing them apart. He reminds them that all of this is from God.

Listen closely to what Paul says in verses 4-9. See if you can pick up on a major emphasis here. *I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. Through him, God has enriched your church in every way - with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*¹ (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).

Do you see how many times Paul references God here? God gave you the gifts (verse 4); God has enriched your church (verse 5); God gave you the right words to say (verse 5); God has given you His knowledge (verse 5); God will be your strength (verse 8); God will make you blameless (verse 8); God is the One who is faithful (verse 9); God allows us to partner with Christ (verse 9). And why do you suppose it was important for Paul to remind these people that “All This is From God”? I believe it’s because they had forgotten that simple truth. In light of what Paul says here we are given the impression that somehow this Corinthian Church thought THEY had accomplished great things for Jesus. They took pride in their gifts, thinking those who possessed certain Spiritual Gifts were better Christians than others. They took pride in their theology, with one group thinking they had God figured out better than the next. They took pride in their holiness, thinking that the more mature believers were better than those new to the faith. This pride made them arrogant, and it was pride that created this schism.

Why do you suppose Paul reminds these Christians of things like: *Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world’s eyes or powerful*

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

or wealthy when God called you. ² (1 Corinthians 1:26). *When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan.* ³ (1 Corinthians 2:1). *You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?* ⁴ (1 Corinthians 2:3). Well, the list goes on and on. The reason Paul feels these issues must be addressed is because by thinking only about themselves, or by thinking too highly of themselves, they have broken off into little splinter groups. Pride had crept into this church, and there was an attitude of arrogance that was tearing this church to pieces. Throughout most of 1 Corinthians it's almost as if Paul was saying "You belong to Jesus, and this is His church, not yours". Later on he says, *"If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord."* ⁵ (1 Corinthians 1:31). In other words, they should be marveling at what God was able to do through them.

So, what must we do to keep this from happening to us? Well, I don't think it's just remembering to watch what we say. I don't think God is satisfied just because I've learned to hold my tongue, because He's said that He is more interested in the attitude of my heart. Based upon what Paul has said here, I believe we all must keep in mind where the ability to do the Lord's work comes from in the first place. It is the mature Christian and the healthy church that realizes God is the One who has enabled us to do anything of lasting value and worth for God in His world. We need to remember, get this, that He has made us saints, that we are all in need of His grace (which happens when we admit our sin), and that anything good that happens within the life of a church happens because of God.

These schisms in the Corinthian Church were pulling them apart. Paul reminds them that God is the One who leads guides and directs His church through Christ His Son. No, Paul was not trying to get them to watch what they say. He was trying to change the attitude of their heart. And a Christian with the right attitude will not create a schism. I pray that we don't need to be reminded of this as well.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

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⁵Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.