

I remember going to Miller Park for the first time in 2001 for the second exhibition game. The stadium for the Milwaukee Brewers had just opened. I remember seeing signs posted on almost every column. Watch out and be alert for flying balls and bats when in your seats. Seemed like common sense. Apparently the team felt a reminder to keep watch was in order.

No one got hit that day. But I've seen people get hit with both on TV. Someone not watching takes a bat right to the chest. Someone not watching gets a foul ball right off the head. It really does happen; people don't pay attention even with the warning. What makes people forget? Is it all the time where nothing happens? Maybe that's what causes people in the world to stop watching or waiting for Christ to return. They feel so much time has gone by that it probably won't happen. They forget that being watchful is what God asks us to do.

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians sounds the warning. We're in the days of the church year that remind us to be vigilant and to be watching. We're in full preparation mode, but not just preparation for Christ to come at Christmas. That might be our first thought, but that happened already. We're watching for Christ's second coming. And this morning...

**God's grace helps you watch**  
**Grace gives knowledge of his coming**  
**Grace gives gifts while you wait**

It feels great when you walk out of a class and realize you actually learned something. You passed all the tests and read all the books and you can remember the facts. At least you remember some of the facts. Of course you can't say you have the book or notes memorized. You probably got some answers on the test wrong. You learned something and gained some knowledge, but it wasn't perfect knowledge.

The Corinthians were fascinated by knowledge. They listened to all the traveling preachers. They were taken in by their ability to dazzle with speech and knowledge. They wanted some for themselves. But Paul reminds them where their knowledge really came from. **"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge."** Paul didn't praise himself for teaching them in such a clear fashion. He didn't praise textbooks or his support staff. Paul didn't even praise the Corinthians for being such good listeners. He praised God for his grace. It was grace that gave them knowledge.

If I gave you a quiz on Biblical facts, how many do you think you could get right? Where was Jesus born? Bethlehem. How many disciples did Jesus have? Twelve. How many criminals were crucified with Jesus? Two. Who gave the order for Jesus to be crucified? What was the name of the man who cut off Malchus' ear? How many pieces of silver was Jesus betrayed for? Who betrayed him? The questions could go on and on. Would you be impressed if someone knew every question about the Bible you could ask? That would probably be very impressive. But what would it earn? Nothing before God. Knowledge doesn't impress God, he's God, he knows it all. And more important facts about the Bible don't mean anything without something tying it all together. We might like knowledge and even hold on to it in order to be saved. But we'll lose that one.

Each week what I share from this pulpit or from that lectern doesn't really change all that much. I'm not some college professor trying to force feed you information until you have all I can give. Thankfully that's not my role. Rather you know what I'll share and where I'll get it from. Paul talked about it this way, **"Because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you."** The testimony about Christ comes from the Bible. That's where the Corinthians got their knowledge. That's where you get yours. The Bible puts Christ Jesus at the center of God's grace, his undeserved love. We have grace from God in order that we might overflow with knowledge about God. We're focused on Christ and looking for his coming. Not as a baby in Bethlehem, but at some unknown time in the future. And God wants us ready. So he sends us his grace through the Bible focused on Christ so we have knowledge of his coming.

To keep patrons happy many restaurants will bring you bread while you wait. The bread keeps you occupied while you wait for your main meal. The world has been waiting a long time for Jesus to return. All the signs listed in the Bible have been met so it could come at any moment. But while we wait God knows we might get distracted, so he takes steps to keep us occupied with something. God in his grace sends Christians gifts while we wait.

When you read the book of 1 Corinthians you quickly see how Paul's attitude towards them changes. He starts positive with thanksgiving in these verses. He changes rapidly to admonition. They have a number of sins they've committed and Paul needs to address them. Even while saying the hard admonitions Paul still can say, **"Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."** Gracious words even though later Paul will condemn them for allowing a case of incest to exist among them unresolved. Paul knows God's grace brought them to faith and God's grace would keep them strong to the end. As they live God's grace gives them spiritual gifts to use to the glory of God.

How are you using this time waiting for the Son of Man to return a second time? Have you examined your relationships lately? Do you take advantage of someone who is weaker than you? Is there someone that you are using just for what they can give you? What about complaining? Or gossiping? Are these out of control to the point where you don't say too much without it being about someone else's problems or about trying to make yourself feel better? Maybe you've lost the desire to serve but without telling anyone you continue to serve with a bad attitude. You may have taken gifts that God gave you and turned them into sinful actions.

Our sins have us separated from God. we didn't deserve his love, his grace. **"God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."** God not only wants a relationship with us he already called us into a fellowship relationship with Jesus; a close personal relationship. We're friends with Christ. How? The faithfulness of God. He gets all the credit. His grace gets all the glory. He sent Jesus when we didn't want anything to do with him. He sent Jesus to forgive our sins and restore our relationship with him. It's all God and the work of his Son Jesus.

So you don't lack any spiritual gift as you wait for his return. The ability to encourage someone is a gift you can use to talk with others and help them see the bigger picture. The gift of generosity is a gift you can use to give of your financial resources and time to help others. The gift of listening you can use to listen to other people's problems and help them work through solutions. You can be someone they rely on to always be there. You don't lack any spiritual gift as you wait for Christ's return. Use those gifts to bring glory to him.

Watched two kids in a waiting room the other day after their mom stepped away for a couple of minutes. The two young kids started off well but as time went by they started poking each other, goofing off, and getting antsy. The longer they watched for their mom to come back the worse their behavior got. Christ still hasn't returned. The longer we watch the harder it gets. Like the baseball stadium we need signs reminding us always to watch. God's grace does that today. Grace gives us knowledge of Christ's coming so we understand that Jesus will return a second time to this earth. When he does he comes to take us home. That's wonderful news we know only by grace. It's also grace that gives us gifts to use while we wait. These help us stay focused as well as win others for glory. The watch continues for Christ's return, a watch completely helped by God's grace.