

SAINTS IN SIN CITY

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Introduction:

1. Reminder of theme: Correction of Carnality.
2. In this message we will study the Apostle Paul's opening remarks/salutation. He writes to the church in Corinth, highlighting their privileged position and thanking God for what He had done in their lives.
3. Concerning the opening verses of the Epistle, David Cloud writes, "Paul first instructs and reminds and exhorts this carnal church about its standing in Christ. He doesn't begin by calling them carnal. He doesn't do that until chapter 3. One of the most effective antidotes to carnality is to know one's position in Christ! Spirituality is to focus on God and the things of God, whereas carnality is to focus on man and the things of man. So Paul begins with Christ, and the great blessings that the believer has in Christ. He mentions God and Christ 13 times in these few verses." (I count 15 mentions from verse 1-9).
4. We will divide the Apostle's salutation into **two parts** for our exposition.

I. THE AUTHOR WRITING THE EPISTLE (VS. 1)

A. His Apostleship (Vs. 1a)

1. Paul's Conversion – the name 'Paul' reminds us of God's marvelous transformation of this Pharisee of the Pharisees. His name was originally Saul but through God's grace he was transformed into Paul.
2. Paul's Calling – "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ"
 - a. Paul's Authority as an Apostle
 - i. The basic meaning of the word 'Apostle' is "he that is sent" (See John 13:16 where the word is translated "he that is sent"). The same word is translated "messengers" in 2 Cor. 8:23 and 'messenger' in Phil. 2:25.
 - ii. It was needful for Paul to emphasis his apostolic authority in the opening lines of this Epistle as his apostleship was under attack (1 Cor. 9:1). As an Apostle, he had the authority and revelation from Christ to issue correct and instruct them as a church.
 - b. Paul's Appointment as an Apostle – Paul was not a self-made, self-called man. His apostleship was from God. Galatians 1:1 "Paul, an apostle, (**not of men, neither by man**, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)"
 - i. The office of Paul's calling – "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ"
 1. There's the call to salvation. You can't respond to the call to service until you first respond to God's call to salvation.
 2. There's the call to service. In a general sense, all believers are called to serve the Lord but there is also

1 Corinthians Series

a special calling for some to give themselves more fully to the work of the Gospel.

3. 1 Tim. 1:12 “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry;**” There is no higher calling!
4. Romans 1:1 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an apostle, separated** unto the gospel of God,”
5. Note: There are no Apostles today (See Acts 1) but the principle of a call to the Gospel ministry (e.g., pastor, missionary, evangelist) is the same. The work of God desperately needs labourers for the harvest field (Lk. 10:2) but it does not need self-called, self-appointed hirelings. Such men do untold damage to churches. You must be **called** of God to that ministry.
 - ii. The origin of Paul’s calling – “through the will of God”
 1. Paul’s calling was according to God’s Divine will. This was God’s plan for his life. What a blessing it is to discover God’s plan and purpose for your life!
 2. Remember! God saved you that He might use you.
 3. Testimony: My call to the ministry at age 7

B. His Associate (Vs. 1b)

1. Sosthenes was a saved man – Sosthenes was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth who apparently took over from Crispus after he was converted (Compare Acts. 18:8 & 18:17). Evidently the Lord also saved Sosthenes!
2. Sosthenes was a serving man – evidently, he became a trusted helper and valued associate of the Apostle Paul. When 1 Corinthians was written, Sosthenes was with Paul in Ephesus.
 - i. We need pioneers for the Gospel like the Apostle Paul who can break new ground and spear head new works for the Lord but every Paul needs men like Sosthenes who can assist them in their labors. Both roles are valuable and important.
 - ii. Note: NBC is not a one-man band! It’s a team striving together for the faith of the Gospel! (Phil. 1:27)
3. Sosthenes was a special man – he is called “our brother”. What a wonderful reminder that when we get saved, we become a part of a new family. God becomes our Father and we have multitudes of brothers and sisters and we are all bound together by a common salvation. What wonderful bonds exist in the family of God!

II. THE ASSEMBLY RECEIVING THE EPISTLE (VS. 2-3)

A. The Description of the Corinthian Believers (Vs. 2)

Paul writes to those who were:

1. Gathered in the Church (Vs. 2a)
 - a. The Description of the Church – “the church of God”
 - i. It’s Organization – “the church”. The word ‘church’ comes from the Greek word ‘ecclesia’ made up of ‘ek’ (out of) and ‘kaleo’ (to call). The church therefore is a called-out

1 Corinthians Series

- assembly. What a beautiful and fitting picture of the church. We are called out of sin and the world to identify with Christ and His people. Moreover, it is clear its membership was made up of those who were saved (“sanctified in Christ Jesus”). This points to the **necessity** of a regenerate church membership.
- ii. It’s Originator – “of God”. This church owed its existence to the power of God. Paul was the human instrument but it was all God’s doing! What a privilege it is to be a part of something God is doing! 1 Tim. 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.”
 - iii. It’s Owner – “of God”. The phrase also reminds us that it the church at Corinth was God’s church. Let us always remember who owns local, New Testament churches. They do not belong to the pastors or their members. They belong to King Jesus!
 - iv. John Phillips writes, “The Corinth known to Paul had been founded by Julius Caesar; the church had been founded by Jesus Christ. The great word at Corinth was commerce; the great word in the church was Calvary. Corinth was noted for its filth; the church was noted for its faith. Corinth was a place for business; the church was a place for believers. The great commodity at Corinth was pleasure; the great commodity in the church was purity. Corinth was a product of the world; the church was a product of the Word.”
- b. The Location of the Church – “which is at Corinth”
- i. This was a **local, visible** assembly of believers. It was not a universal, mystical thing. This church was the most important institution in all of Corinth. What Corinth needed was not more philosophy, pleasure or religion. It needed a Gospel preaching, soul saving, Bible believing New Testament church!
 - ii. This is God’s method and priority for the present dispensation. What the world needs is not more sports clubs, entertainment centers, shopping malls, businesses, universities, businesses and man-made charities and institutions. Nor does it need more Laodicean churches! It needs powerful, Christ-centered, Bible based, Bible believing, Bible preaching, soul saving churches!
- c. Summary: We are building an excellent definition of the New Testament church in this verse. We could summarize it as follows:
- i. “A New Testament Church is an organized assembly of baptized believers”. (A-Z Course)
 - ii. “The New Testament Church is a local, visible, called-out assembly of believers. Its offices are those of the Pastor

1 Corinthians Series

(Bishop or Elder) and the Deacon. Where there is more than one Elder, there is to be an order of authority among them. The Pastor is to lead and rule, while the Deacons are to unburden him of the domestic work of the church. The local New Testament church is to regulate its ministries by wise organisation, and its members by discipline. The end result is the fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NBC New Members Notes)

2. Sanctified in Christ (Vs. 2b)
 - a. The meaning of sanctification – “sanctified”. The word means “set apart”. It comes from the Greek word ‘hagiazō’ which comes from the same root word translated ‘holy’ or ‘holiness’. The word is also translated ‘hallow’ (Mt. 6:9) and ‘holy’ (Rev. 22:11). The basic meaning is set apart for God’s **possession** and **purpose**. “The word is perf/pass/part in the Greek. This means they had been sanctified or set apart by God from the world for Himself in a decisive event in the past and that they were remaining and would continue to remain in a sanctified position or standing.” (Gromacki) There are two aspects to our sanctification:
 - i. Positional sanctification – at the moment of salvation I am set apart in Christ. I become his special treasure. I belong to Him. That’s my unchangeable position in Christ. This was a reality for the Corinthian believers and it is a reality for every born again, blood washed believer.
 - ii. Practical sanctification – flows out of positional sanctification, the ongoing growth process whereby I conformed into the image of Christ. (See 1 Thess. 4:3)
 - iii. “The two aspects could also be called **Standing** and **Walk**. Our standing in Christ is sure and eternal and unchanging, but our walk depends on how we live. It could also be called **Relationship** and **Fellowship**. The believers’ relationship as a child of God is sure and eternal; he was born into God’s family by faith in Jesus Christ; but his fellowship with God in this present world is determined by how he lives.” (Cloud)
 - iv. Note: The problem with the Corinthian believers was not in the positional side of their sanctification but the practical side of their sanctification. They were sanctified in Christ but weren’t living like it!
 - b. The means of sanctification – “in Christ”. They were set apart in Christ. He is both the power and the person of our sanctification.
3. Called to Sainthood (Vs. 2c)

Paul was writing to:

 - a. The Saints Locally – “called to be saints”
 - i. ‘Called’ = the same word uses in verse 1 to describe Paul’s calling to be an Apostle.
 - ii. ‘Saints’ = comes from the same root word as ‘sanctified’. The term “saint” is one of the most common New

1 Corinthians Series

Testament terms to describe a believer. It is used 62 times in the New Testament and six times in the first epistle to Corinth. The root word 'hagios' (holy) occurs 229 times in the New Testament.

- iii. A saint is not a special class of individuals who have been made saints by the Roman Catholic Church to whom we pray in times of need. It is a description of every true believer. If you are saved, you are a saint, a set apart, separated, holy individual in Christ. "Sainthood is no a future destiny but a present standing for the born again, blood washed believer. The big problem at Corinth is that they were not saintly in their practice!" (Gromacki)
- iv. The Corinthian believers were saints in a sinful and wicked place. This is a Divine calling we are to take to heart! We aren't called to sinhood, we are called to sanctified sainthood!
- b. The Saints Collectively – "with all that in every place" – The Corinthian believers were called to be saints along with every other true believer in every place. We note several important points from this phrase:
 - i. The Corinthian believers were not alone! They were saints in Corinth but they were a part of a much bigger family. All born again believers have the same Divine calling.
 - ii. One of the key evidences of a true saint is that they "call upon the name of the Lord". The sinner must call upon the name of the Lord in order to be saved (Rom. 10:13). Once saved, he continues to call on the name of the Lord in prayer. The phrase "call upon" is present/middle/participle indicating an ongoing practice of life. Romans 8:15 "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, **whereby we cry, Abba, Father.**"
 - iii. The Apostle Paul clearly intended his epistle for a wider audience than just the church at Corinth. He writes to the believers in Corinth and all true saints in every place. **Let us take the instruction of 1 Corinthians to heart as a church as it is for us just as much as it was to the Corinthian church of old.**

B. The Desire for the Corinthian Believers (Vs. 3)

- 1. The desire expressed (Vs. 3a) Paul expresses a prayer-wish for the Corinthian believers.
 - a. Grace – "Grace" is the unmerited blessing of God in Christ. Grace is the free gift of salvation. **It is the one-word description of salvation. It's the Gospel in a word.** Amazing grace how sweet the sound! Grace comes before peace because it is God's grace in salvation that brings us to peace with God. There are two aspects to grace:
 - i. Grace to save – the Corinthian believers were already recipients of this grace.

1 Corinthians Series

- ii. Grace to sanctify – the Corinthian believers needed the ongoing work of God's grace in their lives in order that they might grow in sanctification.
- b. Peace – there are two aspects to peace:
 - i. Peace with God – salvation peace. Romans 5:1 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note the order of the words. Grace precedes peace. There can be no peace with God until you receive the grace of God in salvation.
 - ii. Peace of God – sanctifying peace. Col. 3:15 “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Php. 4:7 “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
- 2. The desire supplied (Vs. 3b)
These graces are supplied by:
 - a. God the Father
 - b. God the Son
 - c. Note: Grace and peace are spoken of as coming from both the Father and the Son, reminding us of the equality within the Godhead. Christ is co-equal with the Father.

Conclusion:

1. Have you received God's saving grace? Have you been set apart through salvation?
2. How important is the local, New Testament Church to you?
3. How important is growth in sanctification to you?
4. Are you relying on the grace of God to grow as a Christian?