

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

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Preacher: David Helm

[0 : 0 0] Verse 2, the audience, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs, their Lord and ours.

Author, audience or recipient. And then finally, a word of affirmation. This was absolutely standard in any letter that would have been written, whether it be of a personal nature.

There it is, verse 3, this word of affirmation or greeting. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what are we to make of such a standard opening? Well, first, in regard to author, let us notice that it is from Paul, called by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes.

He's often overlooked. Interestingly, if we were to read back into the birth of the church in Corinth, there is one by the name of Sosthenes.

[1 : 0 8] It's in Acts 18. Paul's conversion of some created a disturbance among others, which ended in one named Sosthenes, who was a ruler of the synagogue, being beaten while Paul went on his way.

Now, I'm not mentioning that name to indicate that the corroboration of the two places means it is the same person, but it could be. That the letter comes from one, Paul, yet among another who would have been known to the church in Corinth.

And notice Paul, in this very standard opening, has a special calling. It's almost as if he wants to begin by making sure, you know, we all have callings, and mine, I am called by the will of God to be an apostle.

That's my calling. He wants them to know that from the very beginning. He has a special role in the church. And just as he has a special role, notice how he introduces them in verse 2, to the church in Corinth called to be saints.

In other words, the opening link is this. Paul, I have a special calling, and you have your calling as well. To be saints. My calling comes by the will of God to a particular office.

[2 : 3 6] Your calling comes by the work of God in Christ to your identity as holy ones. The word saints there is connected to this idea of that which is holy.

You are called to be, in a wooden way, holy ones. The church is calling to be holy ones.

Notice this word on the audience. It's the natural outgrowth of what they have already been made by God in Christ. Did you notice that about the audience?

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus. Now the root of that which is sanctified is the same as that which is the holy ones.

So you have been, let me put it this way, holified. And you're called to be holy ones. Notice the nature of it.

[3 : 3 7] When we think of sanctification, we think what? Of something in the future. This should be a great encouragement to all of you. The work of God in Christ, in your heart, has been accomplished so that Paul actually can speak of it as that which you, we think of that which we will be.

He says that which you have been made. Sanctified. Complete. Done. Set apart. By God. Already.

Already. Already. It isn't, I greet those who I hope will one day be sanctified. I greet you in the fullness of what Christ has done in you.

You are, have been made, holified by God. And you are called to be holy. Notice in the standard opening, the calling is not theirs alone.

But it's something they share with others. Others who like them call upon the name of the Lord. Others who like them look to Jesus Christ as Lord.

[4 : 45] So much for a, I guess I would just call it a standard opening. Now, I want to apply it by way of its emphasis and the things that are striking.

First, we've already alluded to the idea of a connection between what it is to have been sanctified by Christ and what it is that we are to live holy lives in Christ. Each of us needs to know today that what Christ has done for us and be comforted in it.

But we also need to know what we are called to be in Christ. He has accomplished something for us in Christ that we would, with others who call upon his name, live in that very likeness.

Let me put it this way, by a loose translation. The letters from me, who is called to be an apostle, and that by the will of God, to you, to those of you who are called to be holy, knowing, of course, that in Christ you are already holy.

Now, let's pause on that. What a way to begin. It's a striking opening. It's one of the striking emphases. Without pushing forward into the letter, one almost gets the sense that Paul may already, in that phrase, be up to something.

[6 : 13] Could it be a foreshadowing of a challenge for them to become what in Christ they already are? The whole letter of 1 Corinthians.

Perhaps, by hint, we suspend judgment. In these phrases, By way of application, it might be worthy of consideration for ourselves.

Hey, men and women of Holy Trinity Church, don't forget that by calling, we must set ourselves apart for God.

Indeed, we have already been set apart by God. Imagine the incongruity of anything less in your life and mine and in our life together.

Imagine people not living up to their purposes. Remember that God has created you to be His child with the intention that you would live as His child.

[7 : 30] He is holy. He has made you holy in Christ. And He calls you to live a holy life. Sinners, we all were.

Sanctified, we have all become. Saints, we must all live as. And so I ask myself this week, and I ask us, is there anything in our life or our life together that isn't measuring up to what I already know I am in Christ?

Is there anything in my life that I am advocating, adopting, walking in, that isn't consistent with what I have already been made in Christ? Well, this letter will help us in those things.

The second noteworthy emphasis is the nature in which He ties His audience to others. Very strange in a letter.

Did you notice the subtle addition of others in the text? Look back at verse 2. Not only to Corinth, He says He's writing, but then He adds these words, with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 44] That's a strange letter. I'm writing to you particularly, but I'm attaching you to all kinds of people everywhere who aren't even reading the letter. There's a second use of this kind of addition of others in the text there at the end of verse 2, where He includes this kind of phrase, both their Lord and ours.

That's striking to me. That the Corinthian audience has been united in its introduction not only to Christ, but to other non-Corinthian Christians who live elsewhere.

What does that mean? What a strange beginning. What could it mean? Perhaps Paul picks up his pen to write to someone, but knows, given the nature of things, that he can't help but connect them to others who are in fact actually walking this road with them.

Let me put it this way. Do you and I have a propensity to stand alone? I do. Do we have a propensity to be individuals?

To think of ourselves as unconnected? How often do we think of ourselves, define ourselves as belonging to others who are beyond ourselves? Well, this is what Paul wants to say right out of the gate.

[10 : 12] I want to speak to the church of God for me this year in Hyde Park. And I want us to know immediately that we are the church of God here in connection with others.

We are not on our own. We are never to think of ourselves strictly in terms of our life or my life or my gifts, my use of things, my church.

No, he brings us together with others. So there it is, a standard opening with two striking emphases, one which connects us to others, one which calls us to live out that which we already are.

And I pray that you and I will apply that with all grace and humility. Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, we pray for your grace as this opening word of affirmation calls, and for your peace.

and we pray for grace and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ to shake us even today to the transformation that must take place if we are to live holy lives having been set apart as holy.

[11 : 28] And if we are to live connected lives having been birthed into your family. Help us to do it for the glory of Christ in whose name we pray.

Amen.