

Text: I Corinthians 1:1-3

Title: “When We are Saved” Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

Let's return to the book of I Corinthians where I began a study last week. This is a letter. Most of the books of the NT are really letters, written by one of the apostles to the churches that formed after Pentecost. And when it says I Corinthians, that means that there was more than one letter and this is the first. Actually, that is not exactly the case with the church at Corinth. There is a reference in I Cor.5 to a previous letter Paul had written to the church, that was obviously not included in our NT.

But if we had a copy of it, it would have likely begun in the same way this letter begins. You see, there was a customary formula for letters in ancient times.

ILLUSTRATION – When you send an email today there's a format that is consistent:

From:

To:

Subject:

Well, ancient letters had a similar way to start that included three things: the name and identity of the sender; the name and identity of the recipient; and some words of greeting.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3 – (FROM:) Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (something that was disputed in Corinth), **and our brother Sosthenes** (Paul's assistant, and a prominent member of the church in Corinth), **2 (TO:) To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: 3 (GREETING:) Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

I want you to see that the way Paul begins this letter is not just making small talk. He signals in these opening words what he wants to drive home all the way through. He wants them to know who they are in Christ and how they need to grow up into the full experience of that in their lives everyday.

ILLUSTRATION – A little baby named Charles Philip Arthur George was born on November 14, 1948 in London, England. This little 7lb 6oz boy was born to Philip and Elizabeth. When Charles was just 3 years old, his mother, became Queen Elizabeth II, when her father, King George VI, died. What that meant for Charles was that he was never to live the life of a regular child. Because of whom his mother was, Charles would become “Prince of Wales” and “Heir to the Throne.” That means that when his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, dies, Prince Philip will become King Philip.

But from his birth, Philip possessed the title “Heir to the Throne.” And from his earliest days, it was drilled into him who he was by birth, and what he was destined to become. Everyday he awakens to the reality that he is “Heir to the Throne.”

That's what has to happen for all of us as believers. We need to understand what happened to us the day we were born again ... what we became in Christ the instant we were saved.

And that's what Paul is driving home in these first few sentences of his letter. Why? Because, as we'll see as we move on in our study, the believers in Corinth were not living up to their identity. Their lifestyles mirrored the culture of the sophisticated wickedness of their city, Corinth.

So it's important for us, even today, to understand what happens when we are saved.

1 Corinthians 1:2 - To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

Here's what *really* happens when we are saved:

1. THERE'S A RADICAL BREAK WITH OUR OLD WAY OF LIFE.

1 Corinthians 1:2 - To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus...

Circle the word "sanctified." It means to be set apart for God. Now if you're familiar with that word, you understand it in terms of the process of God progressively shaping us into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ ... making us more and more holy as we grow up. It is the process of breaking away from the old life we had before the Christ-life. And that is very important.

But that isn't exactly what Paul was getting at here. And we know that because of the way he phrases this. He uses the perfect tense of the verb which means it's already happened in the past, and its effects continue on into the future. So it refers to something that happened to them when they were saved, whether they knew it or not.

So when God saved you and me, this is what He had in mind ... a radical break with our old way of life. But there's more.

2. THERE'S A SUPERNATURAL CALL TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE.

I Corinthians 2b – "called to be holy..."

Maybe your translation has something like "called saints" or "called to be saints."

By the way, the word "saint" is a just variation of the word "sanctified." "Saints" are "holy ones" who are set apart for God's use.

Our calling is our...

- **Our identity**

ILLUSTRATION – Most of us are familiar with the Roman Catholic concept of sainthood. For some extraordinary Christians who meet certain qualifications, there is a special honor awarded to them as they are given the status of sainthood. That's totally unbiblical.

In fact, the NT teaches us that the status of sainthood is granted to every believer ... and it's not a performance thing, because it happened the very instant we were saved. Every person in the church in Corinth is called "holy," in spite of the fact that many of them were not living like saints.

ILLUSTRATION – I love the old preachers story of the man who came to speak to the preacher about performing the funeral for his brother who had just died. This was a wicked family, and the preacher knew that neither brother was anything but a scoundrel. The man made a bold request. He said, "Preacher, I'll give you \$500 if you call me brother a saint." The preacher was in a quandary because he knew he would be lying if he called the man a saint. But he could use the \$500. Then the idea came to him! The day of the funeral came and he began the eulogy for the deceased: "This departed man was the meanest, cheating-est, no-good character in this whole town ... but compared to his brother, he was a saint."

Brother and sister in Christ, know that you have been called, named, by God a "saint." That's who you are by virtue of your being saved.

In fact, in v.2 Paul addresses them as "the church in Corinth." The word "church" is a word that was borrowed from the secular world, originally. It referred to a community of people who were called out and called together for a purpose.

That's who we are, church. We are called by God out of our old way of life, and into an exciting new way of life in the purposes of God.

- **Our invitation**

I Corinthians 2b – "called to be holy..."

We read those words and it sounds like an invitation ... and that is what it is.

ILLUSTRATION – When you want to invite some friends over for dinner you give them a call. "Hey come over and we'll cook out."

When a person is saved they are responding to an invitation, a call, from God to come to Christ.

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The invitation is open to all. When we hear the Gospel, it is an invitation to come to Christ.

- **Our enabling**

Call is not just an invitation. That's certainly part of it. It is a quickening. When God calls us He issues an invitation to come to Him, and He put's in our hearts the ability to respond to that invitation. It moves us to embrace Christ by faith when we hear the Gospel.

This sense of calling is seen in v.1.

1 Corinthians 1:1 - Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...

Paul just didn't pick up the classified ads in the Jerusalem Star-Telegram and see a "Help Wanted" ad for someone to be an apostle. There was much more to it than that. He was called by the "will of God."

And when you and I respond to the call of God, it is not just a matter of accepting an invitation. The fact is that we don't even have it in ourselves to do this all by ourselves. We are sinners, and we need God's help.

When God calls a human, it's not like us calling an animal. "Here, boy." And the dog promptly proceeds to ignore us.

It's more like Jesus standing at the tomb of Lazarus calling Lazarus to come out. He was dead, even decaying, and he couldn't do it. But it was the call of Jesus that enabled him. This is the way we are saved. We are spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins, the Bible says. At some point, you were listening to a sermon, or reading a book, or listening to your parent share the Gospel with you, and suddenly your eyes were opened, your mind was quickened, your heart was softened, your resistance melted, so that you had the ability to put your faith in Christ.

Paul put it in these terms in Romans 8.

Romans 8:30 - And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Now when I put it this way, you may think, "Well, there's nothing for me to do but wait and hope that God will pick me and call me." Or someone may say, "Well, God's going to save whomever He wants to, and so there's nothing for me to do. I don't need to witness or share Christ with others. God's already made up His mind who will saved."

No, no, no! It's hard to reconcile the mysterious ways of God, but God still holds us accountable to make the choice. And that's why when we are saved ...

3. THERE'S A PERSONAL CRY TO THE ONE WHO SAVES.

There's the call and cry to God to be saved.

Acts 2:21 - And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

But the awesome privilege of all God's people is that we not only call on Him one time to save us, but we call on Him repeatedly to sustain us.

I Corinthians 1:2c – “together with all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...”

“call” is present tense. As the people of God we called upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Acts 2:21). But we also have the privilege of calling upon the name of the Lord repeatedly for His saving power to continue to work in all the circumstances of our lives.

CONCLUSION

This morning, do you feel the compelling to call upon the name of the Lord? Don't take it lightly.

You may be like Lazarus this morning, all bound up in the grave clothes of your old way of life. But you hear the call of God, and that call is a promise that you can be a new person. Call on the name of the Lord.