

Week of September 15 - Your Calling

Small Group Lesson 1

Connect

"Holiness is received, not achieved."

So said the late German theologian Hans Conzelmann (1915 - 1989)

Do you ***agree or disagree?***

Verses - 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 (CSB)

1 Paul, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Sosthenes our brother:

2 To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours.

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and all knowledge. 6 In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, 7 so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Study

1. Here **(v.1)** Paul says he is, "called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will." In Galatians 1:15 Paul says that God set him apart for this task before he was born.

   In brief, Paul was zealous for God in a way that led him to ***persecute followers of Christ***. But then, after encountering the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul became an apostle of Jesus Christ, by God's will, ***openly and aggressively promoting Christianity***. (Acts 9, 22, 26 and Galatians 1)
   a. How did Paul's understanding of ***Jesus*** change?
   b. But, how did Paul's understanding of ***God*** change?
   c. It has been said that, on the road to Damascus, Paul came to understand the ***Christ-likeness of God***. (John 3:16)

APPLY: How does encountering the Christ-likeness of God affect you?

2. Paul was set aside before his birth and later **called** as an **apostle**. In v.2, he says, in effect, that all people who are sanctified in Christ Jesus are **called** as **saints.**
   a. By whom was Paul called as an apostle? [v.1, Gal. 1:15]
   b. Can Paul take any credit for being an apostle?
   c. By whom are all the saints called? [v. 9]
   d. Can saints take any credit for being saints?

3. Paul addresses himself to all saints, blessing them (v. 3) and thanking ***God*** for saving them (v. 4), enriching them already in various ways (v. 5), and strengthening them until the end when they will see the Lord revealed (v. 8).
   a. Does this mean that anyone who actually is called to be a saint can take any credit for their status, or for their behavior, as a saint?
   b. Paul has much praise for God, but does he praise ***any*** of them for good behavior?
   c. Were the Corinthian saints known for their good behavior?

APPLY: Why is it important that our calling and sanctification is His work and not ours?

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for setting us apart before we were born, for the purpose of calling us by your grace to be saints and servants of Christ. Please increase our faith in you, that you will be faithful and strengthen us until the end, when we will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. While we tarry on this earth, in this life, O Lord, we hope and pray that, **by your grace,** we can honor you with our words and deeds and be of service in your kingdom. Please sanctify us and guide us, O Holy Spirit, to follow after the steps of Christ to the Glory of God the Father.

Please add your own individual prayer requests as the Spirit leads you.