

给众教会敲响的警钟：当心世俗化影响——哥林多前书1:1-3

An Alarm Sounded for All Churches—Beware of Secular Influences—1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1–3; 1 Peter 1:14–21

1 Corinthians 1:1–3 (NASB1995)

1 Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Many Christians get obsessed with lofty theology. They love digging into complicated doctrines, but their lives don't match what they profess to know about God. 1 Corinthians helps to bridge that gap.
- 1 Corinthians is different from Romans or Ephesians. It doesn't have lengthy sections of theological truths. Instead, it jumps straight into how to live out those truths. Why? Because the believers in Corinth already had that knowledge.

1 Corinthians 1:5 “...in everything you were enriched in Him, in **all speech and all knowledge.**”

They didn't just know the truth—they were good at speaking it too. They could talk about theology with perfect logic and oratory. That's why Paul didn't need to give them more knowledge. He went straight to pointing out the problems in how they lived. He wanted to challenge them to practically apply what they already knew. That's also why we need to study this letter—so we don't end up with a big gap between what we know and how we live.

- Outline:
Title: An Alarm Sounded for All Churches—Beware of Secular Influences—1 Corinthians 1:1-3
 1. Background of 1 Corinthians
 2. Background of the Corinthian Church
 3. Paul, an Apostle by Calling
 4. Us, Saints by Calling

Background of 1 Corinthians

- “...with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.” (1 Corinthians 1:2): This line, as part of Paul's greeting at the beginning of the letter describing the readers, is very uniquely special. Two reasons why Paul wrote this line:

1. One of the biggest problems in the Corinthian church is pride—they are arrogant, divided into sects that don't get along with each other. So right from the start, Paul subtly reminds them: Don't forget—there are believers everywhere who “call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. You're not the center of the universe. There are true churches and true Christians all around the world. And Jesus is “their Lord and ours”.
2. Christians everywhere need what's taught in this letter. The problem in Corinth is something every church faces: **worldly influence**. All the specific issues in the Corinthian church can be traced back to this. Instead of being the salt and light that influence the world, they brought worldly ideas and morals into the church, and that's what caused all kinds of problems. 【Application】 We, too, must learn to recognize and resist these worldly influences. Only then can we truly live out a life that shows the life-changing power of the gospel.

【Cultural Background】 Corinth was a port city at the southern tip of Greece, near Athens. It sat on the Isthmus of Corinth, a strategic location with easy access in all directions. Because of this, it was a major center for trade and business. Every two years, it hosted a major international athletic event, attracting tourists, merchants, and the wealthy from all across the Roman Empire. Corinth thus became an economically prosperous and culturally diverse city.

【Moral Climate】 Throughout human history, rich wealth almost always brings moral collapse. When people get rich, they'd go after all kinds of pleasure, leading to materialism, carnalism, and all kinds of lustful lifestyles. Corinth was no exception. One of its most famous temples housed a thousand temple prostitutes. These women would openly solicit clients in broad daylight. In fact, the word “Corinthian” itself became a slang term for immorality and sexual indulgence. Looking at this kind of environment, we might think—There's no way anyone here would be interested in the gospel. But the Holy Spirit told Paul: “Go on speaking and do not be silent; ... for I have many people in this city.” (Acts 18:9–10)

Background of the Corinthian Church

- Let's briefly go over how the church in Corinth was started, as recorded in Acts chapter 18.
- “Sosthenes our brother” (1 Corinthians 1:1; also Acts 18:17): In Acts, Sosthenes was the leader of the Jewish synagogue, indicating he hadn't yet believed in Jesus. Maybe God used the experience of him being beaten by the Jews to open his eyes to the reality of the total corruption of the Jewish religion. That painful moment might have caused him to rethink the message of the gospel and the life testimony of the Christians he had seen. The Holy Spirit then convinced him of the truth, and he became a brother in Christ. In 1 Corinthians, his name appeared in verse one as the amanuensis of this letter.

【Analysis】 Paul chose Sosthenes to write this letter (as the amanuensis) for a reason. Sosthenes had a unique relationship with the Corinthian church. He used to be the leader of the

synagogue who led the Jews to persecute Paul and the church. But God turned him totally around. He went from being an enemy of the church to a member of the church family. That kind of powerful testimony is something the Corinthian believers would never forget. When they see Sosthenes' name at the beginning of this letter, they'd be moved to read what follows.

Paul, an Apostle by Calling

- “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (v.1): Paul wasn't saying this to show off his position. He said it to remind his readers that the teaching in this letter isn't just his personal opinion. It comes from God—it carries God's full authority.

【Application 1】 We need to discern what is God's Word and what is not. Don't mix anything else with the Bible. (Example: False prophets might say, “God gave me a dream,” as if that dream was from God. Some believers treat their personal experiences—like a prayer answer or a sense of guidance—as if they were God's direct words.)

【Application 2】 This verse also shows us something about Paul's strong sense of calling. He knew very clearly that God had called him for a mission. He was “called by the will of God” to be an apostle. Even though we aren't apostles, every Christian must have a clear sense of divine calling. God has a specific mission for every Christian believer.

Ephesians 2:10 “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which **God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**”

【Consider】 What are the good works God has prepared for you to walk in? You need a clear sense of doing God's mission. The reason Paul could serve with such bold courage and faithfulness is because he had a strong conviction of the mission God called him to do.

【Example 1】 What **gifts and abilities** has God given you, that you know you must **use them to serve the church**? If you're good at teaching, maybe your calling is to teach, or even to be a pastor. If you're a sister, your first calling is to be a godly helper to your husband—managing the home, loving your husband and children, and raising them to love God. If you're not married yet, prepare yourself for that. Then, use your gifts in the church to help other sisters fulfill their callings too. Do you know what your role is in God's plan? Are you convinced of His will for you?

【Example 2】 This principle doesn't only apply to church ministry—it also applies to **your job or career**. What you do and why you do it should have a sense of divine calling. Don't just go with the flow or work just to get by. Having a sense of mission will change how you work and impact your witness for Jesus at work. Do you see your job with that kind of purpose and calling from God?

Us, Saints by Calling

- “Sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints” (v.2): The definition of "saints" is just those who have been “sanctified in Christ Jesus”. The verb is in the past tense, meaning this has already happened. The word “sanctify” originally means “to set apart.” So, a saint is someone God has set apart. Once we trust in the gospel and belong to Jesus, we are no longer part of this sinful world. We’re now part of Christ’s holy kingdom, where He rules as King. This is the first step in the process of sanctification.

【Question】 If we’ve already been set apart as saints, why did the Corinthian church still live the way they did? Why were they still so badly influenced by the world?

【Answer】 Because believing in Jesus is just the first step. Sanctification is a process. Christians **must work hard by the Spirit to live out the sanctified life**. Even though our identity is “saint,” we still have a sinful nature, and our actual lives don’t yet fully match that identity.

【Application】 Being a saint should remind us of something important: every day, we have a basic responsibility—to pursue a holy life. We want to live in a way that matches who we already are in Christ. This is exactly what the Corinthian church needed to be reminded of.

【Its Final Outcome】 When will this separation between the saints and the world be fully shown? Let’s review the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matthew 13:24–30). At the final harvest, the tares will be pulled out and burned. That’s when the separation will be made clear. That day will be when believers are fully sanctified and completely separated from the world—and when non-believers are fully cut off from God and face eternal judgment.

【Its Beginning】 God didn’t start setting us apart the moment we believed. He began way before we were even born.

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated [i.e., set apart] you...”

Ephesians 1:4 “...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.”

【Key Point】 **If we are saints, then we must live like saints.** Right? That’s Paul’s reminder to the church in Corinth—and to the universal church today. Being called a saint **isn’t meant to make us feel good about ourselves.** It’s a reminder: saints should live like saints. If we don’t, then we’re not worthy to be called such.