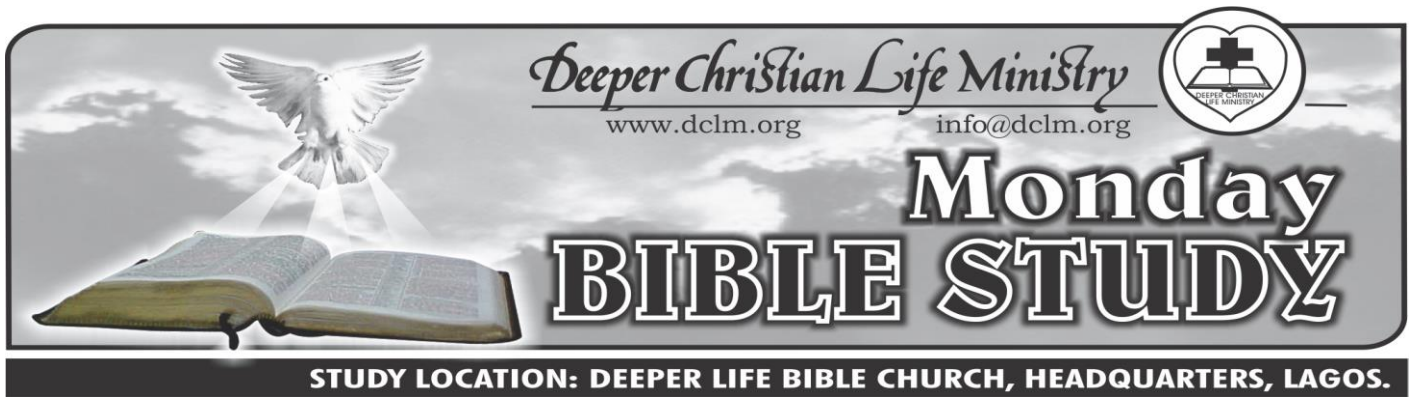




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CHRIST'S PURPOSEFUL CALL INTO HIS KINGDOM

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Our call to salvation is a call to the kingdom of God. As Paul the apostle, the writer of the epistle to the Corinthians, was called to the kingdom of God, the believers in Corinth were also **“called to be saints”**. A sinner comes into the kingdom of God the moment he or she repents and turns to the Lord. Christ said, **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (John 3:3). As stewards of the glorious mystery of the gospel, we must understand the purpose of our call into the kingdom and the responsibility entrusted to us.

1. THE CALL AND CONSECRATION OF CHRIST'S SERVANT

1 Corinthians 1:1

The Lord called Paul the apostle and He responded promptly. He committed and consecrated himself to the Lord and His service. Though he was once opposed to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, He was transformed after he responded to the call of God. Immediately, he was **“called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God”**. It is instructive to consider various areas of his life to learn from his example, pattern of life and ministry. This will enable us surrender our lives completely to the Lord like he did. There are seven things to note:

(i). His Conversion by the Seeking Saviour

Acts 9:3-9,15-17; Galatians 1:15,16,22-24; Luke 19:10

Initially, Paul, who was formerly known as Saul, was lost; but the Lord Jesus sought, arrested and brought him to conviction to do His will. On his way to Damascus, he **“heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks”**. As he responded promptly with His heart, which brought about his conversion, sinners must be prompt in their response to God's call to salvation in order to experience transformation. There must also be definite assurance and witness of the Spirit of God that they are born again.

(ii). His Call to Soul-saving Service

Acts 9:15; 26:16-18; Galatians 1:15,16

The Lord called Paul the apostle to save souls by bringing the gospel message to sinners. Likewise, we are called to soul-saving service to sinners. **“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins...”**

(iii). His Concern for Sinners' Salvation

Romans 9:1-3; 10:1-4; 1 Corinthians 9:16,19-22

Apostle Paul showed concern for the salvation of all sinners – Jews and Gentiles – immediately the Lord called him. His **“heart's desire and prayer to God... is, that they might be saved”**. The Lord wants us to show the same concern for the salvation of all people irrespective of their colour or race.

(iv). **His Consecration with Selfless Surrender**

Philippians 3:7-9,14; Acts 20:24; Romans 1:14-16

Paul surrendered his life and skill to the Lord so that he would successfully carry out the commission he was called to do. He counted **“what things were gain to [him as] loss for Christ”**. He had a pressing spirit to accomplish all that the Lord wanted from him. He said, **“I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”**. To accomplish the mandate of evangelising the world, we must surrender our lives and everything to Him, and make our consecration practical and visible.

(v). **His Commitment despite Severe Suffering**

Acts 26:19-21; 2 Corinthians 4:8-16; 6:3-10

Paul the apostle suffered for the gospel like no other apostle in his generation. Yet, he remained committed despite severe suffering. The Lord wants us to be committed to spreading the gospel everywhere even if it means suffering persecution.

(vi). **His Continuity with Single-minded Steadfastness**

Acts 26:22,23; 2 Timothy 3:10-14; 1 John 2:24

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come”. This verse reveals that in spite of persecution, Apostle Paul continued to emphasise and proclaim the gospel of Christ with single-minded steadfastness. In the same way, we must not relent in our effort to propagate the good news; and we must not adjust or change the message due to challenging situations.

(vii). **His Companions in Sacrificial Servanthood**

1 Corinthians 1:1; 16:15; Romans 16:3,4; 2 Corinthians 12:18; 8:23

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother”. Paul had companions who were addicted to the preaching of the gospel, serving the saints, edifying the church and evangelising the world. They had the same goal, vision, pursuit, passion, commitment and consecration. The Lord wants us to partner with committed and faithful believers to fulfil the mandate of the great commission.

2. THE CONGREGATION AND CONFIRMATION OF CONVERTED SOULS

1 Corinthians 1:2-6

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours... Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you”. The church at Corinth responded to the message of the gospel preached by Apostle Paul and had confirmation of their conversion by the Spirit of God. Even the apostle could bear witness to the fact that they were real children of God. There are three things to note here:

(i). **The Church, Called Out from Sin**

1 Corinthians 1:2-4; Acts 15:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17,18; Titus 2:11,12; 3:4-8

The “**church**” in the original language is *Ecclesia*, which means the “called out people”. They are, one, called out of darkness into light; two, called out of their sin to the Saviour; and three, called out of the world unto the Lord. Therefore, the church is a people called out of sin, iniquity, bad habit, idolatry and all kinds of corruption. When a sinner responds to the commandment to “**come out from among them, and be ye separate**”, the individual is converted and becomes a member of the called out assembly.

(ii). **The Christians Called to be Saints**

1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7; Ephesians 5:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 3:12,13; 1 Peter 1:15,16

Christians are called to be saints. We are called out of sin, darkness and worldly lifestyle to become saints. As saints, the Lord wants us to be holy. “**But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.**”

(iii). **The Chosen, Cleansed, Confirmed and Sanctified**

1 Corinthians 1:2,5-6,27; 6:11; Ephesians 1:4; 5:25-27; Hebrews 13:12-14; 1 Peter 2:9

The members of the Corinthian church were not all sinful. They had believers who were chosen, cleansed, sanctified and confirmed. These were the people Paul the apostle addressed. The Lord has also cleansed and sanctified us for a purpose; he wants us to be saints who are making progress in holiness, righteousness and saintliness every time. We are to remember and abide in our calling as “**a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that... should shew forth the praises of him who hath called [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light**”.

3. THE CONFERMENT OF CHARISMATA ON CONSECRATED SAINTS

1 Corinthians 1:7-9

Charismata are spiritual gifts conferred on consecrated saints. In comparison with other churches, the Corinthian church came “**behind in no gift...**” They consecrated and committed themselves to the Lord when they first came to Him. Thus, He endued them with the gifts of the Spirit. God’s plan for the Church in bestowing these gifts is to accomplish:

(i). **Sons Endowed with Grace**

1 Corinthians 1:3,4; Romans 12:6; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10

As believers, we are expected to possess the “**grace of God**” in our lives. God’s grace brings salvation and righteousness; it makes us have the character and nature of God who has called us.

(ii). **Servers Enriched with Gifts**

1 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 9:8,11; Hebrews 12:28

The Corinthian believers served the Lord and were “**enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge**”. We can be enriched with the gifts of God as well if we appropriate Scripture promises and faithfully serve the Lord.

(iii). **Saved, Ensured by His Goodness**

1 Corinthians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Hebrews 11:5

Apostle Paul had the assurance that “**the testimony of Christ was confirmed**” in the Corinthian believers. As such, he rejoiced over them. This should be our testimony too.

(iv). **Seekers Endued with Gifts**

1 Corinthians 1:7a; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:38,39

The Corinthian believers seriously sought the gifts of God because they knew they were available. Thus, after they were saved and sanctified, they waited on the Lord until they were “**endued with power from on high**”. As saved and sanctified saints, we can also receive and abound in the gifts of the Spirit if we ask the Lord.

(v). **Saints Expecting Him in Glory**

1 Corinthians 1:7b; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Colossians 3:4

The Corinthian believers were “**waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” The Lord expects us to have this same expectation. And “**when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall [we] also appear with him in glory.**”

(vi). **Sanctified, Established in Godliness**

1 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Peter 1:3,4; 3:11-14

The believers in the Corinthian church were sanctified and established in godliness. They were “**partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust**”. One with the divine nature is not in darkness; he is not weak and into the bad habits of the past; and he is not overwhelmed by the attacks, afflictions and temptations of the devil. Christ has given us everything we need to be triumphant and remain holy, righteous and blameless. Therefore, we have no reason to backslide or be spiritually weak. As we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need to remain in sanctification and be established in godliness.

(vii). **Steadfast, Enlisted by God**

1 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 10:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24

God is faithful in His love, mercy, goodness, calling, plan, purpose and the promise that He has given us. Because of His love, we are “**called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord**”. As we become part of God’s family, He enlists and engages us, and makes available all that we need for life and godliness on the basis of His faithfulness. Therefore, we should “**hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)**”.