

Sermon Title: The Power of First Impressions

Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Research shows that by this time in the sermon, I've probably already lost half the room! The human brain processes information & draws conclusions instantly & those conclusions dictate our level of interest!

Some examples: Channel surfing... Responding to calls/texts...Church...

Today we start a new sermon series, & everyone here, or not here, has already drawn conclusions about whether this will be worth their time!

If you're here, and still listening... Why? Why does all this matter? Why have you prioritized "church", worship, the proclamation of the Word?

The Apostle Paul understood the power of first impressions to reveal the importance, and necessity, of his message (this sermon series)! It is why he opens this letter to the church in Corinth the way he does!

Vs. 1 - "Paul..." He doesn't sign his name at the end of the letter but at the beginning! Why do you think that is? Is it pride/arrogance...?

Paul isn't elevating himself! He is validating, as a living testimony, the power of the message that He is about to give to them! He is a changed man! His former self was well known... & now, so too is His new identity!

The level of worth we assign to a thing is often directly linked to the impact it has on our lives! Paul says, "Look at me..." "Now listen to me"! There is authenticity & credibility found in a changed life! Example

"Called by the will of God..." Paul also leads with, "this is a God thing, not a Paul thing!" Paul sees himself as more than just an inspirational speaker, sharing about his personal experience! He is on a mission from God, to speak the message of God, to the people of God!

In advertising, satisfied customers go a long way in shaping people's perception of what they think they need... But when God speaks, when His will is revealed, that should be more than enough to get our attention

"to be an apostle of Christ Jesus..." Credentials matter don't they? Paul speaks with authority, because of the authority given to Him by God

If Paul was giving a message on fishing/medicine, would people listen? Peter/Luke would be much better options to listen to on those topics! Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ, so He is uniquely equipped to speak with authority on the matters of faith & the Christian life!

Who is giving the message matters, but so too are those who receive it!

Vs. 2 - "To the church of God that is in Corinth..." This letter is addressed to believers, to the church! And not just to one church (in Corinth), it is addressed to the "church of God".

God's Word, His message, is not just for unbelievers calling them to faith. God also speaks to believers calling them to daily repentance & obedience, to live out their faith! That call is not limited to space & time!

"to those sanctified in Christ Jesus..." All believers are to be sanctified – set apart as holy. Though this is an ongoing process, Paul speaks about it as a finished work (in the past tense)! Why? How?

The answer is found **"in Christ Jesus!"** If we are a people of faith in Jesus Christ, then we have already been justified in the eyes of God! God no longer sees us as sinners, but as saints b/c of the blood of Jesus!

And shouldn't that truth motivate us to live into that designation, especially when we know we couldn't earn that status for ourselves?

The Apostle Paul is going to say many hard things in this letter to the Corinthian Christians! He is going to call them to the table! But he will do-so as their brother/father in the faith! It's a family table, where status is not in question, but where status is the motivator for change!

"called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." This call is all-inclusive! To all Christians, in all places, at all times – the universal Church!

This letter from Paul is just as much addressed to us today, as it was to the church in Corinth! And we will see that many of their problems, as well as all the solutions given in this letter, are applicable today!

The Church is not a place, a service, etc. It is a people redeemed by God in Jesus Christ, set apart for His service in this world and for His glory!

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