**The call of God**

**We are thinking today** - about being called by God

 So - I want to share a story I heard a while ago

A man walking along the road sees 2 men on opposite sides of the road taking stones from 2 two big piles of stones in the road. They are both building a church. The 2 piles of stones are the same, each made up of different sizes, shapes and colours. But the 2 men have quite different approaches to their task.

One man was very carefully sifting through the pile, choosing stones that all looked the same: the same size, the same shape, and the same colour.

While the other man, was just taking them all: even though they were all very different in size, shape and colour.

The first man built a church that looked very neat, where all the stones - were like each other. It was neat, tidy and uniform. But, of course, lots of stones got left behind in the pile outside.

The second man’s church looked very different, it was all over the place, it wasn’t neat and tidy at all, because he had used all the stones in the pile, making sure that he left none behind.

The first man’s church held together, because every stone was the same, they all fitted neatly, but sadly lots got left out.

The second man’s church held together, not because all the stones were the same; instead, it held together because of all the mortar in between the stones.

***And we all know what that mortar is don’t we***

**If you - were called by God** - to build a church

 Which builder would you be like?

**1 Corinthians 1:1-3 - *The call of God***

**I wonder what you think of** - hear someone is ‘called’

A missionary / minister / youth worker / evangelist

Tend to think of it as something special / set apart

There is a truth to this - but not whole story

There is a general application too - to us all

**Huge part of NT by Paul** - Important to consider him

Think about what he says to each of us today

God’s call on our lives - is a crucial starting point

**This message written** - to the church in Corinth - 56ad

Had heard bad report - answering specific questions

But starts as normal for him - His call - foundation

# **1. All called to Service *- Verse 1***

*Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes*

**Paul is an Apostle** - appointed for special task - by God

Stating his authority here - as was being questioned

Part of problem in the church - factions forming

Sadly still happens today - always destructive

**Why we need to base ourselves** - on a solid foundation

Ensure our calling / faith / dedication - right focus

Is our base for everything - all called to serve God

**An apostle of Jesus Christ** - this is the specific of calling

All called to serve Christ - no-one / no-thing else

Are many forms of service - are equally important

Question for each of us - do we accept this?

**Called by the will of God** - not Paul’s own idea / choice

Apostle / prophet / pastor / teacher / evangelist …

Are you called by God - to the task you are doing

Or are you just doing - what you want to do

This is important - shows God’s hand in it

# **2. All called to the Church *- Verse 2a***

*To the church of God in Corinth*

**When we accept Jesus** as personal saviour - a Christian

We become part of God’s people / His church

The church universal - through time / space

We are part of worldwide church - huge

**In Corinth** - local expression of the church - lots of them

But each local church - should be an image of whole

God’s church in Canterbury - or wherever in world

**Key thing to remember** - it is God’s church - not ours

God Father rules it / HS oversees / Jesus is Lord of it

Often people prefer to keep control - not right

As part of the church - we submit to God’s will

A Theocracy - not a democracy / autocracy

# **3. All called to Holiness *- verse 2b***

*To those sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.*

**Paul uses two words here** - closely related - important

*Sanctified* in Christ Jesus - means ‘*we are made holy*’

**1**. Personal - by trusting in Jesus’ sacrifice

**2**. Progressive - by continuing work of HS

**3**. Positional - by being in the church

All possible through relationship with Christ

**Called to be Holy** - quite a description - not small thing

Are you happy to be called holy - is a responsibility

Holy = saint - same word in Greek - you are a saint

Holy = living close to God / for God - challenge

Being set apart - putting him first - always

**This is where it all becomes very real** - and difficult

And where the final point - becomes essential for us

### 4. All called to Experience God *- verse 3*

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

**While in one sense** - this is a comforting exhortation

It is also much more - and is a full and rich image

One that should be always in our minds / hearts

**It is also a reminder** - that if we are followers of Jesus

If we are part of God’s church - sanctified and Holy

We will be experiencing God’s grace and peace

**His Grace** - simply put - the unmerited favour of God

This is what we all have - through Jesus Christ

An experience of God’s love - a true comfort to us

As well as - and encouragement to share

**His Peace** - the gift of shalom / God’s peace on our lives

We have peace in life - because of our future hope

But it is not all about the future - here & now too

In the turmoil life can bring - the peace of God

Should be an anchor / a firm base - for us all

# **Conclusion**

**These verses are Paul’s way** - of introducing his letter

Affirming valuable points - about the call of God

As a basis for all that is to come - later in letter

**As we hear the call of God** - in each of our lives

We can discover a new / deeper relationship

That will help us move ever closer to God

**Take time to ask yourself** - have I heard his call?

And even more importantly - have I responded?