

## ~ACTS~

## Lesson 28- A Chosen Vessel

Last week we began chapter 9 in our study through the book of Acts, and we learned about Saul's amazing conversion as he encountered Jesus Christ personally on the road to Damascus. And today we are going to start to see the results of this conversion as Jesus calls Saul his chosen vessel. That is largely what we will be discussing today. What does it mean to be **a chosen vessel of God**? Paul was a chosen vessel, and so was Ananias, and so are all who yield themselves to the Holy Spirit to be used by Him.

By way of review, leading up to this point, since Stephen's death, Saul had been persecuting the Church for 3 years, and he received written authorization from the high priest in Jerusalem to go to the city of Damascus and continue arresting and persecuting Christians, but all that changes when Jesus appears to Him on the road to Damascus. To review, let's start by reading **Acts 9:1-9**, and then we will pick up our study today in verses 10-16.

Saul had been blinded by the glory of God, and he was lead into the city of Damascus, and there in Damascus, Saul is in complete solitude for three days, trusting in Jesus, not being able to see, but for the first time, seeing more clearly than he ever has. And he spends the next three days in prayer and fasting and in communion with Jesus Christ.

Now in the meantime, Jesus is also speaking to another man named Ananias and this is where we will pick up our study today...

**10-12)** <sup>10</sup> Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. <sup>12</sup> And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

Notice how God is setting this up for the two men to meet. Neither one of them really knows the whole plan, but God does, and He is working these events out to bring them together. The question is, why did God even involve Ananias? Couldn't Jesus have done everything directly with Saul? The answer is yes, but this is how God operates. He purposely uses faithful men and women in His plans. This gives Him pleasure in working with His children, and it gives us the amazing opportunity to be a part of His plan of redemption. He does this because He wants us involved with Him and His plans. He wants us relying on Him by faith and working with Him. This gives Him joy and pleasure, Heb 11:6, because God wants to have a relationship, Koinonia Fellowship with His children. And as we say yes to Him, and yield ourselves to Him in faith, we begin building our relationship with Him. And as a result, we become chosen vessels of God, working with Him in His plan of redemption. And God is so good, because not only does He invite us to be fellow workers with Him, He promises to reward those who are faithful with Eternal Glory as His Bride, living together forever with Him in perfect Oneness.

God is giving Ananias this amazing opportunity to be a part of His plan of redemption. To be a chosen vessel of the Lord. Just think about the importance of these events. Besides Jesus, there has not been, nor will there ever be another person who has done more for the Kingdom of God than the Apostle Paul, and Ananias has been chosen as God's vessel to bring Saul into the ministry. So God tells Ananias to go to the street called Straight, to the house of Judas and ask for a man named Saul of Tarsus. Notice all this requires faith on Ananias part.

Jesus tells Ananias that Saul is praying. And I would guess that for three days, this is all Saul has been doing: praying and fasting. He hasn't eaten or drank anything for three days and he is continually praying, seeking the face of God. And within these three days, Jesus told Saul in a vision that a man named

Ananias would come and lay his hands on him and he would receive his sight. Notice how God is getting both men to exercise their faith in Him.

And notice that when God spoke to Ananias to go to Saul, Jesus had already told Saul that a man named Ananias would come. How did God know this would happen? God knows the end from the beginning, so did God force Ananias to do this? No, it was in His foreknowledge that He knew Ananias would be obedient and then He stated it as a fact in a vision to Saul. But before Ananias says yes, he has a couple of legitimate questions...

**13-14)** <sup>13</sup> Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.”

You can just imagine Ananias’ hesitancy. He had heard from many about Saul of Tarsus persecuting Christians, probably from the Christians who had come to Damascus for refuge. And he’s asking a legitimate question. It’s not a lack of faith, he’s just trying to understand why God would tell him to do this. I’m sure he’s thinking, are you sure you’ve got the right guy here? Don’t you know why this man is here in Damascus? He has written authorization to arrest all who call on Your Name, Acts 2:21.

But Jesus responds in verses 15-16...

**15-16)** <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. <sup>16</sup> For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”

God is comforting Ananias and assuring him by saying, Go! This one is Mine, I have chosen him, and he will carry My Name to the world. So, what does it mean to be chosen by God? This word chosen in verse 15 is ἐκλογή. It comes from the verb ἐκλέγω, which literally means “to speak out.” And the most common use that derives from this verb is the word ἐκλεκτός, the elect.

Who are the Elect? Entire books have been written on the doctrine of election, but simply put, the Elect, ἐκλεκτός, are those who willingly turn away from sin and turn upon Jesus Christ for Everlasting Life, Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:21; 26:20. The Elect are all those who call upon the Name of the Lord and are saved unto Everlasting Life by having faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation and God’s Grace is available to all, and the Elect are all of us who have been chosen unto Eternal Life with God because we placed our entire trust and faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, **Romans 3:21-23; 10:9-13**. God sent His Son as the propitiation for the entire world, so that all who believe in Him might have Everlasting Life with Him, **1 John 4:9-10; 2:2; John 3:16**. And it is God’s will that all be saved, **1 Tim 2:3**. God’s will is that all be saved, but we know that not all are saved. Why? Because man has free will and must choose Jesus as Lord and Savior. Jesus Himself says “*Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life and there are few who find it,*” Matthew 7:14. The Elect are simply those of us who are chosen by God because we chose to receive God’s gift of Everlasting Life through His Son.

But you might say I thought Jesus chose us before the foundation of the world, **Ephesians 1:4-5**. That is absolutely right! But noticed how He chose us. He chose us, IN HIM. He predestined our Eternal Salvation in Christ Jesus. It is not the individual that is predestined, it is Salvation in Christ Jesus that is predestined, and He placed our salvation in Jesus. Therefore, Jesus died for each and every one of us, and He chose each and every one of us before the foundation of the world that we might be in Him, but it is our decision to choose to be in Him. Our Eternal Life and Eternal Inheritance is in Jesus Christ, but if someone never chooses to be in Christ, then they never apprehend the eternal inheritance that Jesus paid for. This is why Jesus says in Matthew 22:14, “*For many are called, but few are chosen.*” It’s only those who accept His calling, His invitation to eternal life by having faith in Jesus Christ, that are chosen to be His elect. This is

what the parable in Matthew 22 is all about, **Matthew 22:2-6**. God has invited everyone to Eternal Life, and He chose to give everyone the opportunity of Eternal Life in Christ. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. He is the propitiation for everyone, but the only way to apprehend this gift, the only way to accept His gift of Salvation is to have faith in Jesus Christ, Eph 2:8-9. We must believe that He is the only Way to Salvation, John 14:6.

In God's infinite foreknowledge, He knows those who are His. He knows those who are going to choose Him; therefore He knows who will be His elect. He knew this before the foundation of the world, but foreknowledge does not negate free will. Foreknowledge and predestination are not the same thing. Even though God foreknows those who are His, this does not change the fact that we still have free will and that we must choose Him for Everlasting Life. He just knows those who will choose Him. Peter says it like this, 1 Peter 1:2- "*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...*" And it is in His foreknowledge, His *πρόγνωσις*, that He knows those who are His *ἐκλεκτός*, His chosen and elect. And then, according to this foreknowledge, He laid out the entire plan of redemption before the foundation of the world and weaved everybody's decisions into His perfect plan.

So now let's take this a step further and talk about what it means to be a chosen vessel, an elect vessel of God just like He says about Paul. A chosen vessel is a Christian who has surrendered their heart to Jesus Christ to do the will of God. This is one who has positioned his heart to seek the Lord; he has prepared his heart to be used by God. Because of this, God will choose that person in His plans. He chooses the faithful as honorable vessels in His plan of redemption.

Jesus tells Ananias, "... **he is a chosen vessel of Mine.**" Paul was a chosen vessel of honor, an elect vessel, an honorable vessel, elect and precious, whom God in His infinite foreknowledge, set forth in His plan of redemption. And Paul humbled himself to Jesus Christ. He humbled his heart and will to be used as vessel of honor for the Lord. This is what he says in **2 Timothy 2:20-21**. A vessel of honor is a Christian who has set himself apart from the world to be a useful vessel for the Master.

And God being the knower of hearts, and He chooses those who have a heart for Him to be vessels of honor. We are already elect because we believe in Jesus, but being a chosen vessel is the next level. It's the walk of Sanctification. This is being an Elect vessel of honor for Him. This is saying, not my will, but Your will be done, and God selects or chooses us as honorable vessels based on the condition of our heart, **Proverbs 17:3LXX; 16:1LXX; Psalm 139:23-24LXX; 26:2-3LXX; 66:10LXX; Acts 1:24**. This is the process of Sanctification. One who is actively surrendering his will to God, separating himself from the affairs of this world, and trusting in Him completely for everything. It is taking up your cross daily and following Him, Lk 9:23-24.

One who does this has positioned his heart to seek God. It is always a matter of the heart and our faithfulness to Him. And all who would surrender their heart to Jesus in this way are selected as chosen vessels of the Lord, sanctified and useful for the Master. These are chosen vessels selected out from the Elect of God. You could call these the elect of the Elect. These are the bride of Christ who will be rewarded with Eternal Glory. Again, it's not based on works, it's based on faithfulness, **2 Timothy 2:10-12; 1 Peter 5:1-4; 2 Peter 1:2-11; Col 3:1-4; Rev 19:7-8; Eph 5:25-27, 32; Romans 7:4; 2 Cor 11:2**. Being an Elect vessel of honor, the promise of Eternal Glory and suffering for His Name all go hand in hand, and this is why Jesus goes on in verse 16 to say...

**16) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.**

Paul was a chosen, elect vessel of honor to carry the Name of Jesus to the world, and those who carry the Truth to the world are faced with much opposition from the enemy. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12- *all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution*. There is an element of suffering persecution to everyone who does the will of God. This is suffering shame for His Name, and we should rejoice in this

just as the Apostles did in **Acts 5:41**. In verse 16, Jesus says, “**I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.**” Why did Paul have to suffer? Why do we as Christians have to suffer tribulation? The answer is simple... God’s ways and His Truth are contrary to the world. And when we follow God, we are swimming against the current, in a complete opposite direction from the world. This country and this world is going in a direction that we as Christians cannot follow, 1 Jn 2:15-17, and when we resist sin, stand for Truth, and refuse to compromise, this will bring suffering and persecution. We suffer because men love the darkness and hate the Light and they hate anyone who exposes their darkness with the Light, John 3:19-21; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 15:18-21; 16:1-3. But we can rejoice in these sufferings, because these sufferings and tribulations are bringing us into His Eternal Glory.

Jesus said it this way in Matthew 5:11–12-<sup>11</sup> “*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*” <sup>12</sup> *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”

James tells us to... James 1:2–3 <sup>2</sup>*count it all joy when you fall into various trials,* <sup>3</sup> *knowing that the testing (δοκιμιον- the proven genuineness) of your faith produces patience.*

Peter says... 1 Peter 4:12–14 <sup>12</sup> *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;* <sup>13</sup> *but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.* <sup>14</sup> *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*

We rejoice because as we proclaim the Gospel and suffer for His Name, He is being glorified. And this glory rests on us and brings us into His Eternal Glory. Paul was strengthening the Galatian churches in Acts 14:22 saying, “...*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*” Paul said this just after he was stoned to death in Lystra. This suffering isn’t a surprise to God and Jesus tells us to stand strong and be faithful to endure, ὑπομονή, to under-abide in Him, even unto death, **Revelation 2:10; 3:10-11; 12:11; Romans 8:16-18; 2 Cor 4:16-18; James 1:12.**

Have you noticed that in many of these Scriptures it keeps mentioning the reward of a crown and glory? This is eternal life with eternal glory and the crown is a στέφανος, stephanos crown of victory, a victor’s crown, one in which only the Bride of Christ will receive as a reward of faithfulness to Him, 1 Corinthians 3:8-15; 9:24-27. This is what Paul describes as the prize of the upward call in Christ Jesus, Phil 3:14. And these crowns of Eternal Glory and Life and Righteousness will be given to the faithful; to those who were not ashamed of His Name.

I don’t know of anyone who has accomplished more for the Gospel of Jesus Christ than the Apostle Paul, and I also don’t know of anyone who has suffered more for the Name than him either, **2 Cor 11:23-28.** Everywhere he went, he preached the gospel and persecutions followed him. As we proceed through the book of Acts, we are going to see Paul suffer for the Gospel, Acts 9:23, 29; 13:45, 50; 14:2, 5, 19, 21-22; 16:22-23; 20:22-24. And through all this he was faithful and he finished his race with joy. This is why Paul says at the end of his life as he is sitting in a dungeon awaiting his death, suffering as an evil doer for proclaiming the Gospel, he says these final words to Timothy, **2 Timothy 4:7-8.** This crown of Eternal Glory and Life and Righteousness will be given to all who are faithful to Jesus; to all who trust in Him and are faithful, even unto death.

Next week we will continue in chapter 9 as we see Paul transform into a chosen vessel of honor and he immediately begins preaching Jesus as the Christ...