

LIFE OF PAUL SERIES

THE EARLY LIFE OF PAUL

We are beginning a new series for ministers and ministries by studying the life of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote a major portion of the New Testament and he had to pass through several dealings from God in order to be used by God to write several books of the New Testament. It would be a shame if we do not know nor learn from his life. We learned from Jesus. We also learn from Paul as he followed Jesus. Paul himself said, "Imitate me as I imitate Jesus." So we are starting a series to extract valuable truths from Paul's ministry and his life that God anointed, appointed and chose for the benefit of ministers and ministries.

If you were to do a thorough study of the New Testament you realize that it is the Pauline revelation that actually transformed and built the New Testament church. Peter and all the other apostles did build the New Testament Church to a certain extent but the vast and major portion of the revelation of the New Testament was given to one man, the apostle Paul. Many churches established throughout these two thousand years of church history were based on the primary revelation that he received. Paul's revelations were not given systematically to us but developed as Paul tackled problems as they arose in the churches, when the Holy Spirit prompted him to write letters to the churches or when he instructed Timothy and Titus. Paul's revelations to the churches took place in the historical and pastoral context of his life. That is why we need to examine the life of the apostle Paul and learn from his life. So the first thing we are going to see is his early life and conversion of the apostle Paul.

Paul's early life and conversion.

We begin with the Epistle of Galatians. In chapter one we learn some of the things that Paul did and went through even before he knew Jesus Christ. So we are going to look at his early pre-conversion life right up to his conversion.

The story of the apostle starts in the womb of his mother in Gal. 1:15. Verse 15 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.* The story of the apostle Paul started with a woman. We do not know her name but there was a mother who bore this child. Paul was not talking about predestination in Gal. 1: 15 because predestination doesn't begin in the womb. Predestination began in the heart of God before the foundation of the world. So lets examine Gal. 1:15 very carefully – Paul was not talking about predestination. However, Eph. 1 would talk about predestination. *Eph. 1:4 Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.* That's predestination.

So lets divide 'separation' from 'predestination'. They are two different concepts. You may be pre-destined but you may not be separated. The predestination begins even before Genesis one. In the beginning there was God before the world was even made. Before even the angels possibly were made, God saw you and me and He pre-destined us. We have taught and covered predestination in other series before but let me just recap it for the benefit of those who have not heard that teaching.

Predestination is on two levels. The first level is called 'general predestination'. The second level is termed 'specific predestination'.

General predestination governs events and dispensation. God pre-destined for the Israelites to enter the Promise Land. But the Moses generation didn't enter it and so it was deferred and postponed. The second generation went in with Joshua. When God pre-destined an event, that event would never change. It will take

place, however it can be delayed and it can be postponed by human imperfection. So the predestination of events and the dispensations of history in the hands of God are immutable, unchangeable, and they will come to pass but different people may act out the event. God pre-destined for the Israelites to possess the land of Canaan but because of disobedience it was not the generation that came out of Egypt that entered the Promised Land, but rather the following generation that were born in the wilderness plus Joshua and Caleb of the earlier generation that got to enter the Promised Land.

General predestination governs each of our lives and can include to a certain extent all of the will that God has for each life. He has a book up there that has the exact number of people that is going to be born and the exact number of people that is going to die. He knows everything and He has a plan for each one of us. That is general predestination and it is subjected to free choice.

Lets illustrate here with these two microphones. The mike at this height on the right side represents predestination. This red colored mike on the left side represents the free choice mentioned and it is below the first mike. Under general predestination, you will notice that free choice can affect the predestination of event. So it's "downstream" of the first mike. Whatever God plans in our life can be rejected! Predestination does not mean that God will force you to obey Him and carry it out. Predestination means God has a plan ready for you.

That's the first stage, namely general predestination. For example in Acts 1 when Judas Iscariot chose and forfeited the plan that God has for him, the apostles chose Mathias to replace him. And it says, "let his office", meaning the plan the Lord has for Judas Iscariot was given to another person. So for general predestination we can reject it, we can change it, and we can neglect it. The general predestination is under free will. Your free will can choose to rebel against God. It was not God's plan for Lucifer to become Satan. But he chose to rebel against God in his free will and became Satan. It was not God's choice for the Israelites to have a king like the other nations. But the Israelites made a choice to be like the nations around them to have a king and God heeded their voice. The Israelites entered into what we call "His permissive will".

So general predestination involves the predestination of events and it comes after foreknowledge. As a person keeps on being faithful to God's plan, he or she moves into the second level of predestination where God says that those who walk with Him, His mercy is extended to a thousand generation. Those who don't walk with Him but deliberately go against Him the curse comes onto their lives to the fourth generation. It's in the Old Testament. This is before Christ came where the bloodline cuts it. These are God's general principles, showing us that God may plan but man can choose either to be very faithful or to be very faithless. The faithful ones will reach a point where God moves them into their specific predestination.

You have to see predestination as two levels. If you don't see the two levels you will be all confused about predestination and you cannot understand how it can take place. Rom. 9:17 *For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth."* It looks as if God chose and raised Pharaoh to be a bad person. If you read carefully the cross reference to this particular verse which is found in Rom. 9:17 it brings you right back to Exodus 9 verse 16. *But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.* If you read carefully in verse 13 it is under the heading the seven plagues. In another words Pharaoh had resisted God in the first plague. Then he resisted God the second time. And he resisted God the third time, the fourth time, fifth time, and the sixth time. When he resisted God the sixth time. God said, "That's enough!" Don't you know God has a limit? God has a limit. When He allows you to walk in your self-will and rebellion and if you cross the limits of His grace, patience and long-suffering, you move into the second level of His anger, which is dangerous. If you move into the positive side of walking in obedience and even walking the second mile of obeying Him, you also move into the second level of His predestination. No problem with that. However, if you move into the evil side of the second level and if God takes His hand off from you, no human being, no angels, no demons can ever help you again. Pharaoh kept resisting God until God said, "That's it! From now onward I will give him no more chance to repent. I have sealed him for destruction." That means that another level of predestination will take place in Pharaoh's life, which is specific predestination.

At this second level, which is specific predestination, God's purpose is beyond free choice. At the first level, God allows you the free choice to accept or reject His plan. In His plan if you choose Him well and good. God doesn't make us robots. But exercising our free choice is not without limitations. You are free in this country but you cannot keep breaking the traffic laws. As human beings we also know that free choice has a limit. You are free but if you do those things that are wrong with your freedom, your free choice reaches a limit where you will be thrown into jail because you are free but you didn't make use of your freedom correctly and you have become a danger to others. So understand that there is a point of no return along the line of general predestination until at a specific point in your life, your free choices have culminated into a hardening of your will for or against God.

That's what happened to Pharaoh here. It took place at the seventh plague. I believe in Judas Iscariot's life, the same thing happened. He was given chance after chance to exercise a right choice for God. Even in the gospel of John, Jesus revealed at the beginning of His ministry that "one of you is a devil." And right up to the Last Supper when Jesus was washing His disciples' feet, He said, "One of you would betray Me." That was the last straw! That was the last chance for Judas to repent. It was a very loud hint to Judas to repent but he didn't take the hint seriously. And at the Lord's Supper Judas still didn't repent and from that moment onward the devil entered him. That was the day when he surrendered to the devil. Do you remember the apostle Paul talks about some persons being handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh? So there are boundaries within which you can exercise your free choices. However, when you persistently cross the limits and enter forbidden areas, the time will come when God says, "That's it! Enough is enough."

So remember God is a merciful God but He has laws that He has to abide by. Mercy abides by His word. If you cross the boundary of His word, you put yourself in danger of going beyond the grace of repentance and find that one day you cannot repent anymore. You will be like Judas who tried to repent but there is no more grace from God for repentance. He crossed the boundary line at the Lord's Supper. That was his last chance. Jesus even mentioned one of them will

betray Him and all the disciples said, "Is it I?" And when Judas said, "Is it I?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you", and he still didn't repent. So he crossed that limit and he has no more free choice. Do you know one day every human beings will have their free choice removed. At the judgment seat whether the sinner likes to go to hell or not, off he or she is marched to hell. If the sinner says he did not know God personally and that he didn't have a choice, that is not true. The choice was given when he was on the earth. At the point before his death, God will show him a movie of his life in fast motion, and show the sinner where He had sent His servants to speak to him about his life. There is a limit to free choice.

If you keep doing the right thing then the positive side takes place at the second level of predestination. For example in the gospel of Luke chapter one you read about how Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous. They both love the Lord very much and walk with God all the days of their lives. God remember our good deeds even though you cannot claim credit because by His grace you walk with Him, yet God noted those good things you have done. As for Zacharias who walked with God all his life, God rewarded him with a son. And that son will be so special because from the time he is conceived in the womb he will be filled with the Spirit. Can you imagine all the life of John the Baptist he was different from other children? He knew God when he was small. How did that special blessing come on John the Baptist? When his parents stepped into the second level of predestination, they entered into the realm where God could have His way with them. John the Baptist didn't choose God but God chose him by name. The second level deals with person and people.

When the option to choose God and the influence of God is so strong and powerful in your life, sinful temptations will be like nothing. It is as if from the day of your birth till now, you were tuned or programmed into God. But that kind of blessing comes after somebody else (your parents or forebears) or you have paid the price. Think about Abraham. Abraham walked so close with God that he reached the second level where God began to have a special friendship with him. At that time even though he was not so perfect yet God's special grace was there in his life. So there is special judgment and there is special grace. Under special grace there is a powerful blessing in your life and the life of your children. If your forefathers have walked with God the blessing comes on your life in such a way that you literally know that you didn't earn it. But it's a special

present and influence on your life because it is God's way of saying thank you for walking with Me. God's way of saying thank you for loving Me. And God's way of saying this is My gift to you for loving Me. So at the second level even on the good side the free choice comes under the predestination of God. There is such an influence that just flows right through. That literally is like a blessed life from beginning to end. There is such a thing. There are some men of God in the Bible that have tapped into that.

Coming back to Gal. 1:15, we know that Paul was not talking about predestination. Predestination does not begin with your mother giving birth to you. Predestination for your life begins in God's mind and when you constantly make choices to obey God, His plans for you will be activated. So there are two levels of predestination. General predestination when you make choices to obey God and specific predestination when you make right choices for God long enough for Him to reveal His special grace and plans for you. The entry into the second level of predestination can be hastened through intercession, prayer, paying the price of obedience so that God could work in a tremendous way.

In Galatians chapter one Paul says that God separated him from his mother's womb. In Jeremiah chapter one was another one who said "When I was in my mother's womb God called me." Two things happened here. He is not talking about predestination. He is talking about separation. Firstly, somebody asked for special grace from God. In this case possibly the mother. The word 'separate' also means to dedicate, and it also means to break off from, to commit to something. So here there are two things that can take place. First, somebody has dedicated Paul to God. Could be his mother when she was expecting Paul. While Paul was in her womb, the mother must be saying, "Yahweh God I want this child to serve you, to do your work. I dedicate this child to You." Do you remember Samuel's case? Samuel was another child separated even when he was a little boy. That came about through somebody's prayer. Samuel came through Hannah his mother. Separation takes place through a request. Could be by the mother, could be by your parents and could be by a man of God, it could be by anything or anyone. Or you yourself could separate yourself onto God. Just like the same Greek word separation is found in Acts 13 where the Holy Ghost said "Separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas for the work which I have called them to do." Here 'separate' means the same thing: to sever from, to be set apart from the normal

and worldly life, cut it off and go a new direction.

So separation means firstly, somebody has made a decision to God and said, "You can have this child. Could you separate this child to Yourself as we dedicate this child to You." Is there such a powerful blessing? Yes as seen in Second Timothy chapter one. Parent, if you know this truth, if you want your children to be powerful, not necessarily to become a man or woman of God or powerful people in God, you would be invoking this powerful blessing. *II Tim. 1:5 When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.* Look at these three generations of Christians. What was in his grandma Lois who believes in Jesus Christ, that same kind of faith was imparted upon Eunice his mother and imparted into Timothy the third generation. He is not talking about salvation. He is talking about the blessing. Likewise parents do you know that in the natural you can give your children an inheritance. Supposing that God called you home today. What happens? Your children inherit what you have. So in the natural you inherit from your parents and you leave an inheritance for your children. We are comparing the spiritual with the natural. But do you know that there is a spiritual inheritance? My faith can be imparted upon my children. Not just through examples and teaching but through the laying on of hand. *II Tim. 1* is talking about laying on of hand, one of the principal doctrines of the Bible. You could give your children that spiritual inheritance. Of course you must have some spiritual gifts and blessings to impart to your children. If you have reached a certain spiritual level in your life, you could impart spiritual blessings to your children. You could cause them to inherit your faith.

If my children inherit my faith and my spiritual children inherit my faith, they would go on further from there. Just like Elisha went further from Elijah. Joshua went further than Moses. That can take place through a blessing, through a prayer. The spiritual inheritance can be passed on. Spiritual inheritance is as real and as tangible as a natural one. It doesn't mean that you control your children and make them what you want them to be. But it means that even if God didn't call them they will have a special faith to do whatever God planned for their lives. A special grace to do whatever God wants in their lives. It is imparted and it can be in many areas, faith, wisdom, or grace. Every night before your children sleep, it is a good practice to anoint them and pray for them. You not only want

to intercede for them, you want to impart into their lives. So I could imagine there was Paul's mother and she was coming to God and she was expecting this child. She is saying "O Lord, let this child be separated and dedicated to You." A child's separation could take place through somebody's prayer.

The second thing that can take place is when somebody who has that call rejects it and God will be looking for somebody else to give it to. You remember the story of David and Saul. When Saul rejected God's counsel and persistently disobeyed God, God said through Samuel "from this day onward your kingdom will be taken away and given to another one." Do you know that every plan that God has written up there will be fulfilled? People who are called to those plans may fail. When somebody fails God's plan, God will give the job to somebody else to do, since God will never suffer His predestination to fail. Do you remember God offered to Moses and said I will destroy all the Israelites and start with you again? See God's plan still continues even if He has to choose a different instrument to complete it. So when somebody like Saul fails God's calling, plan B takes place. God will be looking for someone to continue that plan. Sometimes He drops it on a little baby in a womb. In Jeremiah's case it may be like that. The call comes in two forms, either through a blessing and prayer or through God just dropping a gift because somebody else didn't fulfill it. That's where Paul was separated from the womb.

Interestingly, Kathryn Khulman was known to say that she was not the original person chosen to flow in her ministry of miracles under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The first two men who were chosen didn't obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and thus, the Holy Spirit chose her instead for the ministry of miracles. Her ministry not only healed thousands but also helped spawn a new generation of ministers around the world who would flow in the ministry of miracles like she did. The Holy Spirit predestinated an event but He had to find a willing vessel who would obey Him to fulfill His plans and purposes.

As a result of that separation in the book of Acts, God started working in Paul's life before he met the Lord. In Acts 22:3 *I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.*

So Paul was educated in the best school. In those days Gamaliel was like a Harvard Business school except that it was religious. Gamaliel was the most recognized, the most senior, the most knowledgeable, the most super of all rabbis. You can see how Gamaliel's position was so powerful from the book of Acts 5:34 *Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people.* The fact that Gamaliel could stand up and influence the entire Sanhedrin council shows you that he was the most senior and respected person. And God so ordained that young Paul should study at the feet of Gamaliel because she consecrated Paul to serve God. So the mother made that decision for Paul from the time when he was young. In those days Hebrew children started the study of the Torah at a very young age. From the time when he was young she made sure her little Paul would get the best education she could find. I could imagine her taking the trouble because Gamaliel always had a full house. So you could imagine there was great sum of money spent for Paul. Paul came from an average family. He was not from the lower strata of society like the disciples of Jesus Christ. He was from the middle class, slightly higher than them. That tells us something. It doesn't matter whether you are a fisherman or a Pharisee. If God anoints you He can use you.

Sometimes we need a balance. There are Christians who criticize ministers who pursue higher learning, saying that God doesn't need your education. They are probably reacting to those learned divines with strings of doctorates and degrees behind their names but are far from God. Many theologians end up with a huge reservoir of knowledge about God but never arrive at knowing God because they do not sit at the feet of the Holy Spirit to learn from Him. On the other hand, Christians who reject systematic and disciplined study of biblical theology often end up either explaining the things of God inadequately or worse, spewing one heresy after another. The best combination is to pursue right education from godly professors as much as possible with the Spirit of Truth as our constant companion. Sound education is never a hindrance to God.

Later it was because of Paul's education and Paul's expertise that he could expound the word and deliver the huge portion of the New Testament teaching which the others could not do. Don't neglect natural training. Even though God calls you to serve Him don't neglect natural training. In the future you find that it becomes useful. Those things have a slight edge in your life to help you in the

ministry.

So there was Paul learning in one of Gamaliel's classes and you can imagine how hard pressed Paul's mother was to provide for his education. Like some of you! You have been working so hard and scrapping every dollar and cent from the bottom of the barrel just to get your children to the best school. That was what the mother of Paul was like. She was an aggressive lady and she wanted the best for Paul. And God used that. Don't underestimate the child that you have. It takes somebody's dedication. Could you imagine the sacrifices Paul's parents made? They paid a lot of money for Gamaliel to personally guide Paul. You see he was personally brought up at Gamaliel's feet. It is just like some of you musicians. You want to excel to become the best. It is not easy to have Beethoven teach you. His school was always full. You cannot even apply to get in. It was only after much screening and testing of your abilities and aptitudes that the school would agree to take you in. It was their choice, not yours. That's how hard to get in.

You can imagine the mother that Paul had. Now part of that character must have rubbed into Paul. He learned from the best school. You can go back to Galatians chapter one and see the kind of character he came out to be. Gal. 1:14 *And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.* In verse 14, Paul says he was the top student. Apostle Paul was a top class student. In Jewish history, Jewish customs and in anything to do with Judaism, he was number one! He says he advanced beyond his peers or those many other kids who were with Paul. As he was learning all about the Hebrew history Paul was always top of the class. Why was he different from other children? Because his mother had dedicated him to serve God. There is a difference when you lay hand on your children. You lay hand on your children and sent them to school they go there with the power of the Holy Ghost. Lay hand and anoint them everyday and you see the difference. You say that is just by chance. Think about Daniel. Do you think by chance they got ten times smarter? No, it is by obedience. You say they were just born with good analytical minds and high I.Q. No, they were not. The three Hebrew children were already smart but they were smarter of the smart. The Bible tells us in the Book of Daniel chapter one that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshkach and Abednego excelled above all the others. When the king questioned them they were found to be ten times smarter than all the rest.

What's the secret? Ps. 119:99 and 100, *"I comprehend more than all my teachers for thy witnesses are my meditation. I discern more than the elders, because I guard thy precepts."* If you obey God's law and statutes and hearkened onto His word He will make you smarter than your teachers and smarter than the ancients. That's God promise. Why was Jesus smart? Because the Holy Spirit was upon Him. Do not ever forget that John chapter one says that He is the light of the world. And every man that come into this world He lighted every man. Smartness lies in the spirit more that it lies in the brain. Every single child born has enough brain cells to beat Albert Einstein if they ever use all their brain cells. The only difference is whether their brains have been touched by the creativity of the Holy Spirit.

What's the secret? Separation. Paul was separated onto God. That is why if any one gives a lame excuse for always being at the bottom of the class and cannot get through the exams and yet says, "I believe God called me to the ministry," I would reply, "You don't know what the ministry is like. It takes a lot of hard work and study too." Sometimes it takes something to quicken a person's life. You may be an average student and something happened to your life and you become top student. If you read the history of Isaac Newton, in school he was average. It so happened that one day he was sent back to his farm, something was turned on in him and he started progressing in his studies. You know that Albert Einstein was not top in his school. He had to work as a clerk but something triggered in him and to me I credit that happening to the working of the creativity of the Holy Spirit. There is a key to tap into that – 'Separation'.

Separation comes before calling. Look very carefully at Gal. 1:15 *It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me.* Do you know that separation comes first and then the call. So at the early stage it is separation first, then call. Let me point to Rev. 17:14 and you will notice the order: *These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.* Know the order you are separated, then you are called and then you are chosen, then you are faithful. They are all different things. 'Separated' means initiated by man. 'Call' means initiated by God. Chosen means initiated by God.

Faithful means the initiative of man to God's call. But it starts with man's choice.

Who chose to separate themselves? Look at the book of Matt. 1:19 *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man.* Look at Lk.1:6 *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* That is separation. When you choose to walk in righteousness and holiness you have chosen to be separated from the world. You see the same pattern: Elizabeth and Zacharias were righteous because they were separated to God. Joseph and Mary were just people separated onto God. When Saul lost his anointing, when Saul lost his office, God went around choosing for somebody after His heart. In the book of I Sam. 16:13 *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers.* If you cross reference to chapter 15:26 *Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel."* Verse 28 *The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.* Do you know that David was God's second choice? But what a powerful second choice! It's very clear from that day onwards. He said, "Saul you are finished!" And God takes the call that you have and going to pass it to somebody else. And that somebody else whom He chose was somebody whose heart was after God. In chapter 16:7 *Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.* So God look into somebody's heart and life and when God was going to take that kingship away from Saul He looked down on Israel and He found a little shepherd boy who always worship Him. God said "That's the one whom I am going to put the kingship upon".

Separating comes before calling. There are two Greek words for 'call'. One is a call to salvation and one is a call in order to do a particular work of God. If you have been in the first service we talked about those in the secular world were called into the secular world. In the book of Matt. 20:16 *So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.* So there is a separation before the call and then there is the call. Do you know that after the call is a test? And after the test is the choice again. Same things are repeated again in Matt. 22:14 *Many are called but few are chosen.* If you read carefully you realize that in some areas concerning call, it is actually the Greek *kalieo* which means a call to

do something. The other time is from the word *ekletos* which a call of salvation. If you examine both parables in Matt. 20 and Matt. 22 the context of it talks about a general call. In Matt. 22 the parable is about the wedding feast. And it says that all the guests were not ready and prepared to come. Verse 9 *Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.* Now that is a general call. God calls everybody. It was a call to salvation. Everybody is called to salvation. God says the gospel has gone forth to call all people onto God. The Greek word for church is the word *ekklesia* which means 'the called out ones'. Everyone who has been born again is been called out from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. So there is a call onto salvation. That calling is for everybody. But after that call is the preparation and some more separation. See there are two separations: one separation before the call and another one after the call.

In Matt. 22 even though everybody was called, the King in verse 11 came in to see the guests. He saw a man who did not have a wedding garment. And He said in verse 12 *Friend how did you come in here without a wedding garment?* And in verse 13 the king said *Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.* Do you notice something here? The choice depends on your preparation after the call. Between the word call and chosen is preparation because the person who is invited to the wedding must not take it lightly. How are you taking your call to salvation? How are you taking your call to walk in righteousness? A lot of people say, "I am called but not chosen". They don't realize that being chosen happens only after the preparation.

Realize that there are two areas of preparations. There is a separation that is involuntary, that is somebody does it to you. You are not able to choose or you are not in a position to choose. It is either you or somebody else lived a separated life and because of that separation the call of God comes to you. But after the call is another separation.

Look at Acts 13:2 *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* Now He said "I have called them, now separate them". Can you see that

there is a call before the separation? And there is a call after the separation and there is a call before the separation. If you read Acts 13 carefully in verse one what were they doing? They were separating themselves onto God. They were already ministering onto the Lord. So there is a separation that comes before the call and there is a separation that comes after the call.

Many people are learning how to live a life of separation before receiving the call and when they separate themselves before the call they are short listed for God's recruitment. When you apply for something, sometimes your application is rejected. When you want to travel on a certain flight and you ring up the airline to book a flight, the staff will either tell you that you can book that flight or the flight is full. Now what happens when the flight is full? They put you on the waiting list. But I had one experience when I cannot even get on the waiting list. Many years back when I was trying to come home to Kuala Lumpur from Melbourne, I was told that even the waiting list was full. I couldn't even get on the waiting list. After waiting for many days I still couldn't get on the waiting list. I said "Is there any other way for me to get home for I have to attend a convention?" The staff advised that there is one way, the 'go-show' method that I can try but don't make a fuss if I don't get it. He said "You just show up and if nobody shows up, you win. But I don't promise anything because it goes first to the waiting list." And the waiting list had hundreds of names. In the end I went for the "go show". It's one thing to believe God for a flight when you are flying alone but it's a different thing to believe with your whole family flying together. So we went to the airport and queued for the possibility of getting a flight out. When we reached the counter I told the staff that we are on a "go show". In the end somehow we managed to fly home. So there are times when you cannot even get on the waiting list.

When you carry out the first part of separating yourself for God, you know what happens? You get on the waiting list. If God were to select anyone for ministry, He will not select from those who haven't begun their life of separation yet. He will not select from those not on the waiting list. He will select from among those on the waiting list. As far as God is concerned there are no "go show". When God selects people for that flight He will choose from the persons on the waiting list.

Do you know there were a lot of people on the waiting list in Jesus' time? Lets look at Luke. 6:13 *When it was day, He called His disciples to Himself.* There were a lot of people on the waiting list. And from the waiting list He called out his disciples. But among His waiting list, among His disciples He chose twelve apostles. I wonder how the rest felt? I wonder whether there was anybody angry that Jesus didn't choose them. But what could He do? Jesus needed only twelve. There were only twelve seats on the flight. At that time Jesus was only authorized by the Father to choose only twelve apostles. It is in God's pattern that He has twelve. He had the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament so now He wants twelve apostles of the New Testament. That was God's pattern.

I wonder whether there was anybody disappointed. There were Matthias, Philip, Stephen and many others. Do you know the rest continued keeping themselves separated? They said "Never mind Jesus, even though I am not among the twelve let me keep myself on the waiting list. Let me keep myself separated and wherever You go I go, where You walk I walk". In the end in the book of Acts 1 when Judas' position fell vacant, in verse 16 Peter said, *Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."* Verse 20 *Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let on one live in it, and let another take his office.*

The one to be chosen to replace Judas must fulfill the two requirements in verse 21 and 22. There were two conditions for the person to be chosen. That is firstly, *these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.* They must be among the waiting list who have been disciples following Jesus. Not just follow Jesus once in a while. Not just going to some of His meetings but they must be with Him all the time. Secondly in Acts 1:22 *Beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.* And among them there could be many persons. In fact I Cor.15 mentioned about five hundred people who had been with Jesus and seen the resurrection. In Acts 1 there were two names in all of the waiting list that were chosen, namely Matthias and Joseph called Barsabas. They got two best choices for one position. They got to cut down one. Matthias felt very happy, I wonder how Barsabas felt. I wonder whether he

was disappointed. I would think that he probably did in the flesh but he was matured and he said, "There is only room for one".

In heaven there were only twelve thrones for the apostles. So there was such a thing as a waiting list. Do you know that when it was time to choose, only those who were called were admitted? And even those who were not chosen there were times when they got special work that God gave them. In the gospel of Lk.10:1, Jesus decided to send seventy disciples two by two. So the seventy began to have their special work for God. We see here separation, call and then separation again and then choice.

So Paul gave himself to God. Although he didn't know Jesus, he gave himself to "his call". He thought that God called him to be a Pharisee. God called him to be like Gamaliel for Gamaliel was his mentor. He wanted to be like Gamaliel. He wanted to serve God. He was zealous for God under Judaism. Paul says that when he was doing all those things and he wants to do the best of his ability. In Galatians 1:14 *I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.* Here is something you learned about Paul's life, if he wanted to do something he does it with his whole heart. He was separated onto his work. Do you know that it cost a lot of money to do what he did in those days? He was traveling about looking for the Christians to persecute. It cost him money. He had to get his donkey. And who was going to feed him? He gave himself to the work that he thought was from God.

In the book of Acts 22:3 *I am indeed a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.* In other words, he believed he was serving God. And he separated himself onto that but the only difference was he didn't know the truth yet. He had zeal onto God. History is filled with men and women whose hearts are filled with zeal for God but their actions are wrong. God has a special grace and mercy in their lives, especially if they were hardworking at it. In Acts 10:1 is a different man but who had zeal for God. *There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regimen a devout man and one who feared God with all his*

household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. Look at those things that Cornelius did. He was a devout man. He has a job to do. But he was a man of charity and he prayed to God always and in this particular case he was even fasting. But the only difference he didn't know God yet. And it seems that people who love God from their hearts even though they don't know God, God manifests to their lives.

You have a separation before the call and then you have a call whether be it a call to salvation or a special call to a special work. The choice is not yet come. A call and a choice are different. A call is saying I like you to enlist in the waiting list. So a call is when God recruits you into His army. But a choice is when God appoints you as someone who holds a rank in that army. Every general starts at boot camp. Not everybody survives boot camp. My brother joined the army but he couldn't take that discipline and in the end he quit. They really make it tough for you. So you get enlisted into boot camp and you go for training and preparation. As you go through then you can be top candidate for the flight. When you get into the top candidate, that is what Paul did, you are not chosen yet. Do you know Paul was called but not chosen yet? Up to the time before his conversion he was called but not chosen. The Greek word for choice implies giving you a name and giving you an anointing. But a call implies giving you a plan. So here is a plan prepare for the plan. But a choice means that there is now an anointing and an ordination. A choice in the Bible sense is a recognition by God. Do we all get recognized by God? Do you mean that we still earn merits with God? We cannot earn merits in salvation. Your works does not save you but your works rewards you. You examine the whole New Testament teaching and realized that you are never saved by works. But you are rewarded according to your works. Salvation comes by grace but rewards come by works. No works no reward. Some people think that reward comes by grace also. No, reward comes by works. There is hard work to do for God.

If you have been giving your life, praying getting up early in the morning, didn't the Bible say that him who diligently seeks God would be rewarded? Heb.11:6 *For he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* In other words if you are not diligent, you have no reward. You are saved but you have no reward. It pays to be diligent in the spirit world because there is a reward. There could be spiritual rewards, natural

rewards, but the spiritual outweighs the natural. But lets get it into our system, that salvation is by grace and reward is by works. A lot of Christians are teaching grace until they produce a bunch of laidback, lazy Christians, who will sit back and say, "Praise God He is going to give me the crown. By grace, I shall receive the crown and the reward. Crown for this, crown for that, garment for righteousness." Do you know that in heaven you can also be found naked? Paul did say that when your works are not done in gold they will be burned up and only you are saved. The only thing you get out of that is salvation. One day at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ in view of billions and billions of souls God is going to ask His angels to open the scroll and he is going to say things like Mary come and get your rewards. And in the witness of billions you come. And He rewards you. He is going to read out all those rewards. When the whole ceremony is over and everybody looks around, there will be many who won't have any reward.

The minimum anyone can get in heaven if he comes to heaven empty handed is a bed in a dormitory in heaven. You have to stay with others in a dormitory. You have to use the common bathroom. Yes, heaven do have bathrooms but not toilets. Your rewards will determine your real estate in heaven once and for all. Any more chance in heaven to earn rewards? Nope. You still can work for God up there but that is to earn your salary to pay for your purchases, new furniture, food etc. But your salary will not pay for extension to your house or buy up land. Some people barely have enough rewards to get an empty bungalow lot but not enough to have a bungalow. They will have to work in heaven to earn enough to pay for erecting a bungalow on their land. Your rewards you receive in heaven as a result of your works of obedience to God on earth will determine the size of your real estate in heaven. As an example, a faithful servant of God on earth may receive a huge palace with 200-500 rooms, 500 acres of land, replete with lakes and forests and animals in heaven. Why so many rooms in his palace? God will still use him in heaven to teach visiting ministers how to serve God properly and these rooms will be used to accommodate them during their stay with the servant of God. This is not a theological flight of fantasy as there are actual witnesses who have returned from heaven to report these matters. I am sharing all these to stir our hearts for heaven.

Lets get this into our system there is a reward for diligence. God sees your labor.

God sees your hard work. God sees your sacrifice and if you want to put it strongly we do earn merits for reward in heaven for spiritual areas. Lets not take such things lightly. Even the apostles Paul speaks about himself in Philippians when he says that he pressed on to the reward. Do you know that he is pressing on something more powerful than you can ever dream of? Paul had so much spiritual revelations that he sees some rewards that many of us don't even think about. Phil.3:14 *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* What is this upward call of God? The upward call is the ordination of God into the things that God has for those who are called, who are separated and who will be anointed and chosen in Him.

Look over at the book of Hebrews chapter one. I want you to know that when Jesus Christ was down here on earth that His rewards were also by works. By grace He worked but if you want to put it in the flesh and blood sense 'hard work'. Heb. 1:9 *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You.* Doesn't it tell you that there's the anointing after you love righteousness, after you have separated yourself onto righteousness. There is a reward for separation. Do you know why a lot are called but not chosen? Some people use that phrase and they put the blame on God's predestination. God sees the same plan but some are chosen though many are called. Lets quit blaming God. There are very few on the waiting list.

Lester Sumrall was in Philippians and he saw the newspaper headlines and the television prime time of a case of a demon-possessed girl. The whole nation was looking at it under the microscope. When he saw it, the Spirit of God said, "Son go and deliver her". He said, "God, send another one for I am not prepared to go" and he kept resisting God. In his book "One With a Vision," he shares how God spoke to him and He said, "Son I have no others!" I wonder what about the other thousands of Christians. They were not on the waiting list. And God's waiting list was empty. And there was a flight coming up and there was no one to get on the flight. The plane had to leave empty. Lester was there and God said, "Son, you go". When the Lord said, "Son, I have no other," Lester bursts into tears and cried. Later on, he went and prayed over the girl and delivered her.

Let me tell you the number of persons on the waiting list is very few and neither

are all the flights fully booked. Do you know only when the flights are fully booked then the waiting list starts but the flights are not even fully booked. There are a lot of mantles going around, mantles of people who have not fulfilled God's plan. The average Christian is sitting down thinking "O God it's going to come if you pre-destine me to be so. If not, then it never meant to be. But right now let me do what I want. I want to be in the world. I want to do these things in the world. O God I don't have time for you. If You call me then I will give You time." They forgot the truth "Separate yourself first before your call". Do you know some are not even called to a special work? Because they are not even separated and God will not even call and even if He did they wouldn't hear. So God never calls them.

A lot of Christians are saying God, "If you will call me to the ministry, then I will give my time to it." But they got it mixed up and are wrong. They haven't got the Bible truth correctly. They must separate themselves first so that they can position themselves to hear God's calling. Then after you are called you must be separated again before you are chosen. Jesus Christ was called. But for thirty years He was separated. And after His thirty years of separation God says, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased. For thirty years He separated Himself for Me." How long have you separated yourself for God. How long did you offer yourself to God?

Paul says in Rom. 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present...* Now God is not accepting the presenting of your body yet. Nevertheless, offer to God your bodies first. Offer to God your life, Offer to God your talents. You present them to God first. Don't expect God to accept them immediately. But you present them to God. Paul says *I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* So he says offer to God your bodies. Offer to God your life. You know why a lot of people are not hearing God? Because they are not offering themselves to Him. They are not giving to Him their sacrifices and their offerings.

I would challenge you to do this. Do like what Solomon did at the beginning of his life. He offered to God one thousand burnt offerings. He offered and offered until God appeared in a dream and says, "Son, ask anything you want". You may have to offer to God your body, your soul, and your whole being for a thousand days. But if you will stand and separate yourself from the world and offer to God yourself, your being, your dreams, your ambition, your self-surrender, you get yourself on the waiting list. One day God will say, "Offer accepted!" God marked, "Keep In View," next to your name when He puts you on the waiting list. Once a while He asks your guardian angel, "How is he?" The angel says, "He is still doing fine." Once in a while He checks on you. The angel reported, "Lord, he is still there offering himself to You". One day God declares, "Offer accepted". Then He will call you. Then He will review His plan for you. Then you would still need to go through separation and then another anointing. When you offer to God all that you are it means giving yourself onto God entirely.

For Paul he moved from separation into call. He knew God's call but he didn't understand. He only saw a shadow. He thought that serving God meant observing and enforcing the Jewish ways. But whatever little he had; what little he knew he gave himself a hundred percent without compromise. He did it well. He did research into Jewish history until he was thoroughly good at it. And he brought himself into a position where God will one day show him the full meaning of that call. So offer to God your body.

The Lord Jesus Himself obtained His anointing by the same method. He was not anointed because He was Jesus. He was anointed because He loves righteousness. You are not going to be anointed just because you are appointed to be a prophet. Elisha was called in 1 Kings 19 where he was appointed a prophet. But he was anointed only in 2 Kings chapter 2 when he passed a test. When God calls He promises you a work. He says, "This is the work and this is the plan now prepare yourself." You will not be anointed just because you are called into that. A lot of people are called and they moved into that call but they have no anointing for that call. Because the anointing comes in the Bible you have to mix cinnamon etc. The anointing comes by rubbing all those things there. And Jesus was anointed because He loves righteousness.

The apostles were told God is going to send the Holy Spirit down. But Jesus says I want you to do something. Don't you ever leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes down. Do you notice predestination is such that God has the dispensation of sending the Holy Spirit but the predestination required that the apostles and the one hundred and twenty disciples separate themselves to God. And for ten days they separated themselves, giving themselves to prayers and to seek God. At the end of ten days the wind of the Holy Spirit came in. Separate yourselves onto God. Give yourself to whatever God has spoken to your life. Then the anointing will come. There will be a day my friend when God will manifest in your life. When He manifests through your life, you would know that you have met the living God.